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Marxism Today

EDITORIAL COMMENTS

E. J. HOBSBAWM — KARL MARX AND THE BRITISH LABOUR MOVEMENT

C. DESMOND GREAVES — JAMES CONNOLLY—MARXIST

BETTY SINCLAIR — JAMES CONNOLLY—TRADE UNIONIST

A. RAFTERY — "LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY"

DISCUSSION:

IDRIS COX — THE NATIONAL PROBLEM IN BRITAIN

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Marxism Today

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CONTENTS

		page
	Editorial Comments	**161**
E. J. HOBSBAWM	**Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement**	**166**
C. Desmond GREAVES	**James Connolly (1868-1916) Marxist**	**173**
Betty SINCLAIR	**James Connolly—Trade Unionist**	**177**
A. RAFTERY	**"Labour in Irish History"** ...	**183**
DISCUSSION:		
Idris COX	**The National Problem in Britain**	**188**

AMONG ARTICLES IN JULY AND FORTHCOMING ISSUES

"The Action Programme of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia" (Extracts)

Bert RAMELSON	**Workers' Control**
John MAHON	**Three Years of Labour Government**
Max EGELNICK	**The Tory Party in Opposition**
Brian SIMON	**Marxism and Education**
Joe SLOVO	**Prospects for Armed Struggle in South Africa**
Bert BAKER	**Television Trends**
Willie THOMPSON	**Franz Fanon**
D. LAWSON	**Spotlight on Structuralism**
Peter WYNCOLL	**The First International in Nottingham**
John FOSTER	**Oldham's Revolutionary Tradition**
Tony CHATER	**The Roots of Racialism**
G. LEWIN	**Recent Discussion on the Asiatic Mode of Production**
Honor ARUNDEL	**Parents and Children in Literature**

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Editorial Comments

THE 150th anniversary of Marx's birth (May 5th, 1968) has been celebrated throughout the whole world—especially in the socialist countries. Even in the capitalist countries there have been many articles in the press devoted to this important anniversary. In Marx's birth-place—Trier—there was a notable gathering as people from over 20 different countries gathered together to commemorate this event.

But Marx was not always treated as a figure of such importance nor accorded such universal respect. For the greater part of the 150 years since Marx was born he has been treated in exactly the opposite way. He anticipated such treatment himself and described it vividly.

In the preface to the first edition of *Capital* he writes about the fate of "free scientific enquiry" into political economy and says: "The peculiar nature of the material it deals with, summons as foes on to the field of battle the most violent, mean and malignant passions of the human breast, the Furies of private interest". And in the preface to the second edition he develops this point further, declaring that the sharpening of the class struggle:

> ". . . sounded the knell of scientific bourgeois economy. It was thenceforth no longer a question whether this theorem or that was true, but whether it was useful to capital or harmful, expedient or inexpedient, politically dangerous or not. In place of disinterested enquirers, there were hired prize-fighters; in place of genuine scientific research, the bad conscience and evil intent of apologetic".

Fundamental Ideas

These "hired prize-fighters" lampooned, distorted, suppressed, "exposed", refuted and "destroyed" the truths of Marxism time after time, year after year. And they are still with us. There are those, for instance, who proclaim that Marx was right in his analysis of 19th century capitalism but that now things have changed beyond all recognition. Capitalism is no longer the same animal as that described by Marx. Marx therefore has no real relevance for the problems that exist today. So doff your hats to the old sage—but in the words of that master of political economy, Harold Wilson, "We must look elsewhere than in Highgate Cemetery" for answers to our economic problems today.

A look at the world today—and at Harold Wilson's Labour Government—suffices to refute this argument. Marx's analysis of capitalism revealed as its basic feature, *the exploitation of the working class* by the appropriation of the surplus value it creates in the process of production. This is not eliminated by inevitable changes in the form of capitalist economic development. On the contrary. Mergers, take-overs, the transition to state monopoly capitalism, intensify the exploitation of the working class not reduce it. And it is because Wilson's Labour Government seeks to maintain, assist and perpetuate this exploitation that the British people face such severe economic problems.

A second fundamental idea proclaimed already in 1848 by Marx and Engels in the opening words of the *Communist Manifesto*, is *class struggle* as the motive force of historical development in societies based on exploitation, this class struggle arising inevitably out of the antagonistic, opposed, conflicting interests of exploiting and exploited classes.

Basing themselves on these ideas and not on those of the learned "prize-fighters", over one thousand million people have finished with capitalism and are advancing on the road to socialism. These tremendous advances stimulated and made possible the liberation of hundreds of millions of former colonial peoples from imperialism. This indeed is what is new in the world situation.

And in the most advanced capitalist countries it is Marxism to which all those who are revolted by the waste, exploitation, slaughter and decadence of capitalism—especially the young—are turning. More and more, people are beginning to realise the truth of the statement made by C. Wright Mills in his book *The Marxists* ". . . his (Marx's) ideas have come to influence world history . . . we cannot understand the history of any nation without considering Marx's ideas and what has happened to them." It is the basic humanism of Marxism embodied above all in the fight for socialism, which stands in such stark contrast to the anti-human outlook and practice of the defenders of capitalism, imperialism and racialism.

More than ever before people of the most diverse outlooks are seeking "Dialogues" with Marxism to find a common basis for understanding the world we live in, and for purposive action to transform it into a place fit for human beings to live in.

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"The Point is to Change it"

And this is the essence of Marxism which is more, much more, than a method for the study of society, or a particular brand of political economy. The well-known words engraved on Marx's tomb in Highgate Cemetery (The last of his IX "Theses on Feuerbach") —"The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to *change* it"— represent that unity of theory and practice directed to understanding the world in order to change it, which is what Marxism is all about.

And this is what Engels emphasised in his magnificent speech at Marx's grave.

> "For Marx was above all else a revolutionist. His real mission in life was to contribute, in one way or another, to the overthrow of capitalist society and of the state institutions which it had brought into being, to contribute to the liberation of the modern proletariat, which *he* was the first to make conscious of its own position and its needs, conscious of the conditions of its emancipation."

Marxism has had an enormous impact on world history. It revealed to the working class—the most decisive class in modern capitalist society—its real mission, to become "the gravedigger" of capitalism. Marxism has much to celebrate on this 150th anniversary of Marx's birth. But it is still confronted with great tasks, the most difficult ones of all, to break the economic and political power of the capitalists in the most advanced, industrialised countries of the West. And the closing of the ranks for this struggle urged so eloquently by Marx in the *Manifesto* and which characterised his own work in the International Working Men's Association, is the best way to commemorate this 150th anniversary.

James Connolly Centenary

We celebrate in this issue of *Marxism Today* not only the 150th anniversary of Karl Marx's birth but the centenary of the birth of the great Irish revolutionary James Connolly.

If Marx established the leading role of the working class in the struggle for socialism, Connolly applied Marxist ideas to the interpretation of Ireland's national struggle, showing that the working class, the only "incorruptible inheritors of the fight for freedom in Ireland", were the only force that could successfully lead the century-old struggle to completion.

British reaction killed him after the Easter Week Revolt of 1916. Bereft of his leadership, the Irish Labour Movement played a role—which though vital and militant—was subordinate to the leadership of middle-class elements in the national struggle that followed on the uprising.

Speaking at the Sixth National Conference of the Irish Workers' Party on March 17th-18th of this year, Michael O'Riordan, its General Secretary, declared:

> "This Marxist analysis by Connolly has been proved true. Since Connolly died there have been two great 'sell-outs' by the propertied class in Ireland. The first was the imposition with native capitalist connivance of the imperialist so-called 'solution' of the Irish question in the form of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921; and 45 years later the inherent characteristic of the propertied class was again demonstrated even by that section who were radical enough to oppose the 1921 Treaty, but who in 1966 capitulated completely to imperialism in the form of the Anglo-Irish Free Trade Agreement. How right Connolly was!"

We print in this issue of *Marxism Today* articles by Desmond Greaves on *Connolly the Marxist*, by Betty Sinclair on *Connolly the Trade Unionist*, by A. Raftery, editor of the *Irish Socialist*, on Connolly's *Labour in Irish History*.

Among the many millions of socialist and progressive people all over the world who will this month be paying their tribute to James Connolly, we are glad to make this modest contribution.

Why Labour's Crisis?

Why did the Labour Government get into a crisis and engage in all those reactionary measures against which its supporters are in rebellion as the by-elections show?

This question has seldom been examined by any of Labour's right wing. We are perhaps indebted to Mr. William Simpson, who is chairman of the Foundry Workers Section of the Amalgamated Engineers and Foundry Workers, and a right-wing member of the National Executive Council of the Labour Party, for endeavouring to do so in a conference of the Foundry Section of the Amalgamation at Scarborough recently.

Mr. Simpson's picture is one of the economy prospering in the early stages of the Labour Government and then proceeding to run into difficulties created by other people. Rhodesia, the closing of the Suez Canal, the dock strikes, the trouble over liner trains, all of which led to yet another financial crisis, calling forth the Government "measures of squeeze and freeze, the Prices and Incomes Act, the standstill on the wages front, and running concurrently with these events, were General de Gaulle's rejection of Britain's attempts to join the Common Market".

This is a picture that simply won't do. External events certainly affected the position but the main thing was the abandonment of the general line advocated at the General Elections of 1964 and 1966.

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"The Labour Government was elected with a view to the more efficient handling of national affairs, and a rapid expansion of our industrial productivity based on socialist principles, and public control of our key industries", Mr. Simpson tells us.

Well, why didn't they try it? Virtually the first thing the Government did was to operate a Tory deflationary policy. It raised the bank rate to 8 per cent and imposed a tight credit squeeze. Was that conducive to "a rapid expansion of our industrial productivity based on socialist principles"? When later, "national productivity began to stagnate" this was a direct result of the "squeeze and freeze" inaugurated by Mr. Callaghan, in the very first weeks of the Government. The Government recognised in its very first weeks that excessive overseas military expenditure was a factor in Britain's crisis. It played with the problem for three long years and it was not until Britain, as a result of such policies, had been plunged into devaluation, that it agreed to abandon its East of Suez policy. Even then this policy is being operated in slow motion, and it will not be until 1971 that this policy described by Mr. Simpson as "a welcome but insufficient reduction of our arms expenditure" will have any effect. Mr. Simpson argues that "the dilemma is that because of our international commitments and pacts, this is inevitably a long-term remedy for a short-term malady". This cannot however excuse the long delay which allowed the situation of the British economy to get worse. Mr. Simpson does not appear to see that he is arguing that the Government was justified in adhering to the so-called international commitments and pacts, to the detriment of the British economy.

Is it Really Socialist?

Mr. Simpson believes that it is necessary to reduce social expenditure and makes the following completely Tory suggestion:

> "Is it really Socialist that everyone, regardless of their wealth, should have free medicine and family allowances? Why should not people pay according to their capacity, which was once indeed a proud Socialist principle."

The attack on the Health Service which this suggestion reflects is the very reverse of a Socialist principle. Socialists have supported an efficient, universal health service for every citizen, as a top priority in a civilised society. A free service however has to be paid for by taxation, and this is what happens with the Health Service, and, in as far as taxation remains relatively progressive, this is a better way of paying for it than any other that has been suggested. The suggestion made by Mr. Simpson is an out and out Tory one. It proposes to run the Health Service on poor law principles, i.e. free for the poorest, graded payment for everyone else, which will enable a certain amount of tax relief for the well to do taxpayers. This is the very reverse of socialism.

The formula "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" is the formula of distribution in the highest stage of Socialist society, i.e. Communism. It is the formula based on a society which has developed its power to produce to the utmost possible extent. Karl Marx expressed this in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*:

> "In a higher phase of Communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under division of labour, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labour has vanished, after labour has become not merely a means to live but has become itself the primary necessity of life, after the productive forces have also increased with the all round development of the individual and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

That is something very different from the formula from each according to his capacity to pay taxes on incomes earned in capitalist society. Nevertheless the latter is a reasonable enough formula for taxation in present-day society. It has nothing in common with formulae whose application would completely wreck the National Health Service. Mr. Simpson's failure to recognise the glaring faults of Labour policy will not do. The sooner he and others admit the role which right-wing policy has played in making the situation of the British economy worse, the nearer we will be to understanding and changing some of the completely wrong policies still being perpetuated.

World Dialogue

An international discussion between Christians and Marxists was held in Geneva from April 8th-11th under the auspices of the Department on Church and Society of the World Council of Churches. The theme for discussion was "Trends in Christian and Marxist Thinking on the Humanisation of Technical and Economic Development".

The 45 participants, of whom eleven were Marxists, came from Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America. Amongst the Christians were Protestant, Roman Catholic and Orthodox.

There was a very wide agreement between the Marxists and the great majority of Christians that the fight to make life and conditions more human involved action for the radical transformation of society, above all action against imperialism.

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In the words of the communiqué the great majority of participants:

> "agreed that economic, cultural, political and military oppression by the imperialist powers allied with national oligarchies in different parts of the world constitutes the most widespread form of dehumanisation, and that it is not possible to speak of humanisation without expressing active solidarity with the struggle for national liberation of oppressed people. The most significant example at the present time is the people of Vietnam."

A moving aspect of the discussions were the reports from Latin American Christians showing their deep involvement in national revolutionary struggle and the common struggle of Christians and Marxists against imperialism.

The discussion also turned on the future of the dialogue. The possibility was raised of an international Christian-Marxist discussion in Paris next year. Themes for the dialogue were examined and the participants showed the wide variety of forms of dialogue that had taken place in different countries.

Christians and Marxists against Racialism

One of the themes suggested for international Christian-Marxist discussion was the roots of racialism and the fight against it.

In Britain ever since the dialogue first developed the danger of racialism has been one of the common concerns of Christians and Marxists, and it was not by chance that it was Danny Lyons, a leading Communist in the docks, who together with a Catholic priest and a Protestant Minister held the first public meeting at the London docks against the racialism of Enoch Powell.

In Yorkshire members of the Yorkshire District Committee of the Communist Party have been holding a series of discussions with members of the Roman Catholic Church at the Wood Hall Ecumenical Centre, a Catholic pastoral centre. Again racialism figured largely in the discussion.

On May 4th the "ad hoc" Committee, which the participants in the discussions had set up, met to discuss what *practical* measures they could take against racialism and issued the following statement:

> "We, the undersigned, deplore and oppose the speech delivered by Mr. Enoch Powell, MP, on Saturday, April 20th, in Birmingham. We believe that it increased the opportunities for the expression of extreme racialist views and the danger of racial violence.
>
> "It produced a feeling of insecurity and fear among many coloured people who have settled in this country.
>
> "Coloured immigrants by their work and skills make a valuable contribution to the economy of Britain and to the social services.
>
> "We are of the opinion that it is the duty of political and religious leaders to develop among those sections of the British people who may, at present lack it, a spirit of tolerance and respect for those of different races, cultures and religions.
>
> " 'Our goal must be to build a world—a world developed to the full, so much so that every man, no matter what his race or creed, can live a truly human life. Our goal must be for every man, a life set free from all oppression.' (*This is Progress*, Encyclical Letter of Pope Paul VI, 1967.)
>
> "We feel that racialism diverts attention from the real causes of poverty, insecurity, inadequate housing and education, to innocent groups of people, indentifiable by colour. We feel it necessary to recall the tragedies which resulted from a systematic discrimination against Jews in Nazi Germany resulting in the deaths of millions of innocent people.
>
> "We support the principle of legislation which will provide effective protection against racial discrimination. We believe that the present Bill before Parliament is a step towards adequate legislation though we believe that it should make provision against discrimination on religious grounds, and that Northern Ireland should not be excluded.
>
> "While legislation is vitally important, it is urgently necessary to take social measures to solve housing and educational problems in areas of special need, to prevent human suffering, and to avert situations which can be exploited by racialists.
>
> "We are firmly of the opinion that it is possible for people of different races, cultures and religions to live side by side peacefully and in mutual respect. We pledge ourselves to do all in our power to work to create this atmosphere in the particular spheres of our own work and activities."

They also agreed to hold a general meeting of representatives of various races, Communists and Catholics from six Yorkshire towns to promote action groups.

The statement was signed for the Communists by Mr. R. Wilkinson, Mr. J. Beresford, Mr. H. Hill and Mrs. J. Bellamy, and for the Catholics by the Rev. Cassian O'Neill, Mr. J. Rossiter, Mother Sebastian, Mrs. N. Kavanagh and Mr. F. S. Danes.

President Nkrumah's Testimony

Lawrence & Wishart are publishing early in June a new book by Kwame Nkrumah—*Dark Days in Ghana*.[1] This will be eagerly read by all who want to get a better understanding of the way forward in Africa and of the causes of the setbacks to African freedom sustained in and following the 1966 coup in Ghana.

This is at once President Nkrumah's justification of the policies of his progressive government in Ghana, indictment of the imperialist-engineered

[1] Kwame Nkrumah, *Dark Days in Ghana*, Lawrence & Wishart, paperback, 12s. 6d.

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coup of army officers and policemen which temporarily overthrew his government, and declaration of future aims. As such, its publication is a political event of great significance.

The reader's just indignation is aroused by Nkrumah's account of the atrocities which accompanied the army coup, and of the systematic measures the conspirators then took to pull down the progressive edifice which was being built in Ghana, so as to deliver the country over again to imperialist and neo-colonial exploitation.

Nkrumah deals in detail with the difficulties, political, military and economic, which his government had earlier faced, and frankly discusses questions as to the rights and wrongs of the actual measures taken under his leadership. These parts of the book are of great value for drawing the lessons of the past and calculating future policies.

The Open Philosophy and the Open Society

There has just been published by Lawrence & Wishart *The Open Philosophy and the Open Society*.[2]

Readers familiar with anti-Communist literature will recognise in the title a reference to that famous two-volume work by Dr. Karl Popper (professor at the London School of Economics and expert in "scientific method"), *The Open Society and its Enemies*. In these often reprinted volumes, together with *The Poverty of Historicism* plus a number of articles in various more or less learned journals, Dr. Popper made a sustained and comprehensive attack on Marxism on nearly every question Marxism has anything to say about.

Maurice Cornforth's new book is written in the form of a reply to Dr. Popper. It is high time someone replied in detail, he says—and a very lively, hard-hitting and clear-headed book is the result. He emphasises that it is a reply to Dr. Popper's polemics against Marxism, not a polemic against Dr. Popper: on various theoretical questions about the nature of scientific method, he agrees that Popper has made a valuable contribution to science. What he shows, however, is that it is Marx who actually applies scientific method to social questions, while Popper commits every fallacy under the sun in order to put over a "criticism" of Marx.

The themes treated include the scientific methodology of Marxism; materialism and materialist dialectics, with the relation of dialectics to formal logic; the Marxist conception of historical development, historical prediction and organisation to make history; the relation between "institutional" and "class" analysis in social theory; political power and the problems of democracy; equality and freedom as social goals; problems of socialism, socialist planning and the transition to communism.

[2] Maurice Cornforth, *The Open Philosophy and the Open Society* (396 pages), Lawrence & Wishart, hardback 63s., paperback 30s.

Le Duan on Vietnamese Revolution

We published in our May issue the second half of a booklet by Le Duan, Secretary-General of the Lao Dong Party, on the October Revolution and the Vietnamese Revolution.

The first half that deals with the impact of the October Revolution, with the three aspects of revolutionary struggle in the world (the building of socialism and communism; the non-capitalist development in the newly independent countries; socialist revolution in the imperialist countries), with the world strategy of struggle against imperialism, and with the analysis of neo-colonialism, is also of great importance.

A certain limited number of copies of this pamphlet can be obtained from the British-Vietnam Committee.[3]

[3] Le Duan, *Forward under the Glorious Banner of the October Revolution*, British-Vietnam Committee, c/o 25a Abbey Gardens, London, NW8, 2s. 6d.

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On the 150th Anniversary of the Birth of Karl Marx:

Karl Marx and the British Labour Movement

E. J. Hobsbawm

We print below the Annual Marx Memorial Lecture that was given by E. J. Hobsbawm in the Conway Hall on March 15th, 1968. The meeting was organised by the Marx Memorial Library.

THE Marx Memorial Lecture, which I have the honour to give this year, commemorates the death of Karl Marx. This is why it is held on March 15th. However, we are this year celebrating not only the 85th anniversary of Marx's death, but the 150th of his birth, and we are still within a few months of the centenary of the publication of the first volume of *Capital*, his most important theoretical work, and of the 50th anniversary of the Great October Revolution, the most far-reaching practical result of his labours. There is thus no shortage of anniversaries in tidy round figures, all connected with Karl Marx, which we can celebrate simultaneously on this occasion. And yet there is perhaps an even more suitable reason why tonight is a good night to remind ourselves of the life and work of the great man—the man whose name is now so familiar to all that he no longer has to be described, even on the commemorative plaque which the Greater London Council has at last put up on the house in Soho where he lived in poverty and where now the customers of a well-known restaurant dine in affluence.

Irony of History

It is a reason which Marx, with his sense of the irony of history, would have appreciated. As we gather here tonight, banks and stock exchanges are closed, financiers are gathering in Washington to register the breakdown of the system of international trade and payments in the capitalist world; to stave off, if they can, the fall of the almighty dollar. It is not impossible that this date will go down in the history books like the date October 24th, 1929, which marks the end of the period of capitalist stabilisation in the 1920s. It is certain that the events of the past week prove, more vividly than any argument, the essential instability of capitalism; its failure so far to overcome the internal contradictions of this system on a world scale. The man who devoted his life to demonstrating the internal contradictions of capitalism, would appreciate the irony of the accident that the crisis of the dollar should come to a head precisely on the anniversary of his death.

My subject for tonight, which was fixed long before this, is Marx and British labour; that is to say what Marx thought about the British labour movement and what that movement owes to Marx. He did not, at least in his later years, think much of British labour, and his influence on the movement, though significant, has been less than he or later Marxists would have wished. Hence the subject does not lend itself to the usual rhetoric of commemorations, but I do not think a Marx Memorial lecture is an occasion for such rhetoric, nor that a historian is specially qualified to practise it. It is an occasion for realistic analysis, and I shall try to be realistic.

What was Marx's opinion of the British working class and its labour movement?

Two Phases of British Labour

Between the time that he became a Communist and his death, British labour passed through two phases: the revolutionary phase of the Chartist period and the phase of modest reformism which succeeded it in the 1850s, 1860s and 1870s. In the first phase the British labour movement led the world in mass organisation, in political class-consciousness, in the development of anti-capitalist ideologies such as the early forms of socialism, and in militancy. In the second phase it still led the world in a special form of organisation, namely trade unionism and probably also in the narrower form of class consciousness which simply consists in recognising the working class as a separate class, whose members have different (but not necessarily opposed) interests to other classes. However, it had abandoned the effort and perhaps even the hope of overthrowing capitalism, and accepted not only the existence of this system, seeking merely to improve the con-

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dition of its members within it, but also, and increasingly, it accepted—with certain specific exceptions—the bourgeois-liberal theories about how such improvements could be achieved. It was no longer revolutionary, and socialism virtually disappeared from it.

No doubt this retreat took longer than we sometimes think: Chartism did not die in 1848 but remained active and important for several years thereafter. No doubt, looking at the mid-Victorian decades with the wisdom of hindsight, we can observe that the retreat concealed elements of a new advance. Thanks to the experience of those decades the revived labour movement of the 1890s and of our own century would be much more firmly and permanently organised, and would consist of a real "movement" rather than a succession of waves of militancy. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt that it was a retreat; and in any case Marx did not survive long enough to see the subsequent revival.

Marx and Engels had high hopes of the British labour movement in the 1840s. More than this, their hopes of European revolution depended to a great extent on changes in the most advanced capitalist country, and the only one with a conscious movement of the proletariat on a mass scale. This did not occur. Britain remained relatively unaffected by the revolution of 1848. However, for some time after this Marx and Engels continued to hope for a revival of both the British and the continental movements. By the early 1850s it became clear that a new era of capitalist expansion had opened, which made this much less likely, and when even the next of the great world slumps—that of 1857—did not in fact lead to a revival of Chartism, it became clear that they could no longer expect very much from the British labour movement. Nor in fact did they expect very much from it, for the remainder of Marx's lifetime, and their references to it express a growing disappointment. Marx and Engels were not, of course, the only ones to express this disappointment. If they deplored the "lack of mettle of the old Chartists" in the movement of the 1860s, so did non-Marxist survivors of the heroic period, like Thomas Cooper.

"Bourgeois Infection"

Two observations are perhaps worth making in passing at this point. The first is that this "apparent bourgeois infection of the British workers"[1], this "embourgeoisement of the English proletariat"[2] will remind many of us of what has been happening to the British labour movement in an even more headlong period of capitalist expansion and prosperity through which we have been living. Marx and Engels were, of course, careful to avoid the superficiality of the academic sociologists of the present, who think that "embourgeoisement" means that workers are turning into modest copies of the middle class, a sort of mini-bourgeoisie. They were not, and he knew they were not. Nor did Marx believe for a moment that the expansion and prosperity from which many workers undoubtedly benefited, had created an "affluent society" from which poverty had been banished, or was likely to be.

Indeed, some of the most eloquent passages in *Capital I* (cap. 23 sect. 5) deal precisely with the poverty of those years of capitalist triumph in Britain, as illustrated by the parliamentary inquiries of that time. Nevertheless, he recognised the adaptation of the labour movement to the bourgeois system; but he regarded it as a historical phase, and indeed, as we know, it was a temporary phase. A socialist labour movement in Britain had disappeared; but it was to *re*appear.

The second observation, which also has its relevance for the present, is that the mid-Victorian decades did not lead Marx to turn himself into a Fabian or a Bernsteinian revisionist (which is the same thing as a Fabian in Marxist costume). They led him to alter his strategic and tactical perspectives. They may have led him to become pessimistic about the short-term prospects of the working-class movement in Western Europe, especially after 1871. But they neither led him to abandon the belief that the emancipation of the human race was possible nor that it would be based on the movement of the proletariat. He was and continued to be a revolutionary socialist. Not because he overlooked the contrary tendencies or underestimated their force. He had no illusions whatever about the British labour movement of the 1860s and 1870s—but because he did not regard them as historically decisive.

Why the Change?

How did Marx explain this change in the character of the British labour movement? In general, by the new lease of life which the economic expansion after 1851 gave to capitalism—that is to say by the full development of the capitalist world market in those decades—but more specifically by the world domination or world monopoly of British capitalism. This thesis first appears in the correspondence of Marx and Engels around 1858—after the failure of the hopes they had placed in the 1857 slump—and is repeated at intervals thereafter; mostly, it should be noted, in letters by Engels. Consequently, Engels also expected the end of this world monopoly to bring about a radicalisation of the British labour

[1] Marx to Engels, April 16th, 1863.
[2] Engels to Marx, October 7th, 1858.

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movement, and in the 1880s Engels did indeed repeatedly observe that both these things were happening, or could be expected to happen.

The best-known passage is probably that in the introduction to the first English translation of *Capital I* (written in 1886), but his correspondence in those years returns to this argument time and again, sometimes in order to explain why the revived socialist movement in Britain was not yet making enough progress, more often in a spirit of optimism; for Engels was perhaps more sanguine in his political expectations than Marx, and perhaps also a shade more inclined to see economic changes as inevitably bringing about political results than his comrade. He was, of course, right in principle. The so-called Great Depression of 1873-1896, did mark the end of the British world monopoly and also the rebirth of a socialist labour movement. On the other hand he evidently underestimated both the capacity of capitalism as a whole to continue its expansion, and the capacity of British capitalism to safeguard itself against the social and political consequences of its relative decline by imperialism abroad and a new type of domestic policy.

Marx himself spent less time—at least after the 1850s—in discussing these broad economic perspectives and more time in considering the political implications of the increasing feebleness of British labour. His basic view was that:

> "England, as the metropolis of world capital, as the country which has hitherto ruled the world market, is for the time being the most important country for working-class revolution; moreover, it is the *only* country in which the material conditions for this revolution have developed to a certain degree of maturity. Hence the most important task of the International is to accelerate the social revolution in England."[3]

Requisites for Revolution

But if the British working class had the material requisites for revolution,[4] it lacked the willingness to make a revolution, that is to say to use its political power to take over power, as it might have done at any time after the parliamentary reform of 1867. Perhaps we should add in passing that this peaceful road to socialism, on the possibility of which for Britain Marx and Engels insisted at various times after 1870,[5] was not an alternative to revolution, but simply a means of "removing legally such laws and institutions as stand in the way of working-class development" in bourgeois-democratic countries; a possibility which evidently did not exist in non-democratic constitutions. It would not remove the obstacles which stood in the way of the working class but which did not happen to take the form of laws and institutions, e.g. the economic power of the bourgeoisie; and it might easily turn into violent revolution in consequence of the insurrection of those with a vested interest in the old *status quo*; the point was that if this happened the bourgeoisie would be rebels against a legal government, as (to quote Marx's own examples) the South was against the North in the American Civil War, the counter-revolutionaries were in the French Revolution and—we might add—in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-9. Marx's argument was not concerned with any ideal choice between violence and non-violence, or gradualism and revolution, but with the realistic use of such possibilities as were open to the labour movement in any given situation. Of these, in a bourgeois democracy, Parliament was clearly a central one.

Yet the British working class was plainly not ready to make use of any of these possibilities, even the formation of an independent Labour Party or independent political behaviour by such individual workers who happened to get elected to Parliament. Without waiting for the long-term tendencies of historical development to change the situation, there were several things to do: and one of the great merits of Marx's writings is to show that communists can and must avoid both the error of waiting for history to happen, and the error of opting for unhistorical methods such as Bakuninite anarchism and pointless acts of terrorism.

In the first place, it was essential to educate the working class to political consciousness "by a continuous agitation against the hostile attitude shown towards the workers in politics by the ruling classes"[6]; i.e. by producing situations which demonstrated this hostility. This might, of course, imply organising confrontations with the ruling class, which would lead it to drop its appearance of sympathy. Thus Marx welcomed the police brutality during the Reform demonstrations of 1866: ruling-class violence could provide "a revolutionary education". So long, of course, as it isolated the police, and not those who fought them. Marx and Engels were scathing about the Fenian terrorist actions in Clerkenwell, which had the opposite effect.

In the second place, it was essential to ally with all sections of non-reformist workers. That is why, as he wrote to Bolte (23.11.1871) he worked with the followers of Bronterre O'Brien, relics of the old

[3] Marx to Meyer and Vogt, October 9th, 1870.

[4] Marx, *Confidential Circular*, 1870 (*Werke* 16, p. 415).

[5] Marx, Speech after The Hague Congress 1872 (*Werke* 18, p. 160); Marx, *Konspekt der Debatten ueber das Sozialistengesetz* (K. Marx—F. Engels, *Briefe an A. Bebel., W. Liebknecht, K. Kautsky und Andre I*, p. 516): F. Engels, Preface to English translation of *Capital I*.

[6] Marx to Bolte, November 23rd, 1871.

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socialism of Chartist days, on the Council of the International:

> "In spite of their crack-brained ideas, they constitute a counterweight to the trade unionists. They are more revolutionary . . . less nationalist and quite immune to any form of bourgeois corruption. But for that, we should have thrown them out a long time ago."

Ireland and the British Workers' Struggle

However, Marx's main recipe for revolutionising the British situation was through Ireland; i.e. by the indirect means of supporting colonial revolution and in doing so destroying the major bond which linked the British workers to the British bourgeoisie. Originally, as Marx admitted, he had expected Ireland to be liberated through the victory of the British proletariat.[7] From the late 1860s he took the opposite view—namely that the revolutions in the backward and colonial countries would be primary and would themselves revolutionise the metropolitan ones. (It is interesting that at much the same time he began to have these hopes for a revolution in Russia, which sustained him in his later years.)[8] Ireland acted as a fetter in two ways: by splitting the English working class along racial lines, and thus by giving the British worker an apparent joint interest with his rulers in exploiting someone else. This was the sense of Marx's famous statement that "a nation which oppresses another cannot itself be free". Ireland was thus at one moment the key to England—more than this, to the advance of progress in the world in general:

> "If we are to accelerate the social development of Europe, we must accelerate the catastrophe of official (i.e. ruling class) England. This requires a blow in Ireland, which is the weakest point of Britain. If Ireland is lost, the British 'Empire' goes, and the class struggle in England, which has up to now been sleepy and slow, will take more acute forms. But England is the metropolis of capitalism and landlordism in the entire world."

Marx's Influence on British Labour

I have spent some time on the details of Karl Marx's attitude to the British labour movement—mainly in the 1860s and early 1870s when he was closely involved with it through the International. He wrote about it in those days not so much as a general historical analyst, but rather as a political strategist and tactician, considering concrete political situations. The situation of the 1860s has passed away for good, and nobody would claim, least of all Marx himself, that what he had to say about it in detail applies to any other period. On the other hand it is always instructive to see a Marxist master-strategist and tactician at work—and we must remember that, as Engels liked to recall, Marx *was* a master-tactician in the rare periods when he had the chance to be.

As it happened, he failed to "re-electrify the British labour movement", and this failure, as he realised, condemned the international movement to wait for very much longer. And when the movement revived, Britain and the British working class no longer played the potentially central role in it that they might have done, while Britain was "the metropolis of capitalism and landlordism everywhere". As soon as he realised that the strategy of the 1860s had failed, Marx ceased to concern himself very much with the British labour movement. However, at this point we may logically turn to the other half of the question about Marx and British labour, namely the effect which Marx and his teaching had upon the labour movement in this country.

Let us first be clear on the limits—on what were probably the historically inevitable limits of this influence. It was not likely to produce a revolutionary labour movement in a country which lacked the experience and tradition of revolution, and any situations—then or later—which could be even faintly described as revolutionary or pre-revolutionary. It was not likely to produce a mass labour movement inspired and organised by Marxism, because when Marxism appeared on the scene, a powerful, well-organised, politically influential labour movement already existed on a national scale in the form of trade unionism, consumers' co-operation and Liberal-Labour leaders. Marxism did not precede the British labour movement. It was not even coeval with it. It appeared a third of the way through its lifetime to date. It is no use looking abroad and observing that Marxism played or plays a much larger part in the labour movements of some countries than in ours, because, since history does not develop uniformly, we cannot expect the same developments everywhere. The peculiarity of Britain is that it was the oldest, for a long time the most successful and dominant, and almost certainly the stablest capitalist society, and that its bourgeoisie had to come to terms with a proletarian majority of the population long before any other. The influence of Marxism has been inevitably circumscribed by this situation.

On the other hand we could expect Marxism to play an important part in the formation of that new—or renewed—stage of the British workers' class-consciousness, which led them to abandon confidence in the permanence and viability of capitalism, and to place their hopes in a new society

[7] Marx to Engels, December 10th, 1869.
[8] Marx to Laura and Paul Lafargue, March 5th, 1870.

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—socialism. We could expect it to play an important part in forming the new ideology, the strategy and tactics, of a socialist labour movement. We could expect it to create nuclei of leadership, political vanguards if you like—I am using the term in a general sense here and not only in the specific Leninist sense. How large or important these were, how significant the part they played within the larger movement, might be uncertain and unpredictable. In other words, we could have expected Marxism to have a significant, but almost certainly not a decisive influence in shaping the British labour movement of the 20th century. This is a pity, but that is another question. We may perhaps be reconciled to this relatively modest role of Marxism if we look at some continental movements in which the influence of Marxism was initially far greater, so much so that the entire labour movement took the form of Marxist social-democratic mass parties, but nevertheless these movements were basically as moderate and reformist as the British, if not more so; for instance in Scandinavia.

Theories of Capitalism and Socialism

Now in the two respects which I have singled out, the influence of Marx was unquestionably great—much greater than is commonly realised. Ideologists of right-wing labour have searched desperately for alternative founding fathers of British socialism, from John Wesley to the Fabians, but their search has been vain. Methodism in particular, nonconformist protestantism in general, have undoubtedly coloured a lot of the British labour movement, and in a few special cases such as the farm-labourers and some of the miners, provided both a framework of organisation and a cadre of leaders, but their contribution to what the movement thought and tried to achieve—to its socialism—has been minimal. The contribution of Marx has been capital, if only because Marx's analysis is the only socialist analysis which has stood the test of time. The archaic British forms of socialism—Owenism, O'Brienism, etc. did not revive, though an essentially "agrarian" analysis of capitalism long remained influential. Fabianism, in so far as it had a specific analysis of capitalism (e.g. the specific economic theory of the Fabian Essays) never got off the ground. It survived and became influential merely as a more "modern" formulation of what moderate labour leaders had always done, namely pursuing piecemeal reforms within the framework of capitalism.

In so far as the British labour movement developed a theory about how capitalism worked—about the nature of capitalist exploitation, the internal contradictions of capitalism, the fluctuations of the capitalist economy such as slumps, the causes of unemployment, the long-term tendencies of capitalist development such as mechanisation, economic concentration and imperialism, these were based on the teachings of Marx, or were accepted in so far as they coincided with them or converged with them.

In so far as the British labour movement developed a programme for socialism—based on the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange, and rather later, on planning, it was once again on the basis of a simplified Marxism. I am not claiming that the entire ideology of the movement was so based. It is clear, for instance, that some very important parts of it, e.g. the attitude to international questions and peace or war, were based substantially on an older and powerful liberal-radical tradition. Nor am I claiming that the ideology of all parts of the movement was so based. Its right-wing leaders, especially when they got anywhere near government office, always looked for some alternative source of economic inspiration drawn from bourgeois liberalism—whether in the form of the free-trade orthodoxy of the Lib-Labs and Philip Snowden, the LSE-type marginalism of the early Fabians, or the Keynesian analysis of the Labour Party ideologists since 1945. But if we go down to the grass roots—to the men and women who canvassed for elections, who collected dues and led industrial movements at shop and factory level, and so on: their theory, and very often their practice, were much the same as that of the members of officially Marxist organisations; and the other way round. I do not say that they got this theory from reading *Capital* or even *Value, Price and Profit*, any more than the sort of sub-Freudianism which is the basis of American conversations about personal problems is necessarily based on a reading of Freud. Their theory derived from Marx in so far as they were socialists, because the basic theory of socialism, at least in the respects I singled out above, was the one formulated in a Marxist manner; generally, it must be admitted, a very simplified manner. In one way or another this had become part of their political lives.

Marxism and the Pioneers

This was natural, because Marxism—or at all events some sort of simplified version of Marxism—was the first kind of socialism to reach Britain during the revival of the 1880s, the one most persistently propagated by devoted pioneers at a thousand street corners, and the one most persistently and ubiquitously taught at a thousand classes run by socialist organisations, Labour colleges or freelance lecturers; and because it had no real rival as an analysis of what was wrong with capitalism. It was also natural, because the Marxist

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organisations formed and still form by far the most important school for the militants and activists of the labour movement, and this in spite of the sectarianism which has often plagued them. This is perhaps most obvious at the real grass roots of the British movement, in the unions. From the days of the young John Burns and Tom Mann, to those of the militants of today, Marxist organisations of one kind or another have provided the education of the union activists. It has been one of the great historic weaknesses of the old ILP, and of its successor, the parliamentary Labour Left, that it has had and has such feeble roots in the industrial movements. Conversely, taking account of their relatively modest size, the Marxist organisations—whether SDF, Socialist Labour Party, the Communist Party, etc. have had a disproportionately large influence among the union activists. It is true that many of these changed their political opinions as their careers advanced, but if we are talking about Marx's influence, we cannot leave even them out of account.

Cadres

It would be easy to illustrate the disproportionate influence of Marx, and of the relatively tiny organisations of Marxists, on the wider labour movement. The Marxist organisations themselves have often underrated it, because they have measured it not against reality, but against their ideal of a Marxist *mass* labour movement; whereas in fact their historical importance has been as groups of cadres or potential cadres, of leaders and brains rather than of followers. Their importance has so far lain not so much in converting vast masses of workers into members of a mass Marxist movement or the acquisition of voters, but in their role within a great, politically and ideologically heterogeneous, but powerful class movement bound together by class consciousness and solidarity, and increasingly also by the anti-capitalism which the Marxists were the first to find words for when socialism revived in the 1880s. Because this movement has so often fallen short of their expectations, they have often been disappointed in it. But that disappointment was also often due to unrealistic expectations. The General Strike was a magnificent demonstration of the movement's strength; but it was not, and was not even faintly within sight of being, a revolutionary or even a pre-revolutionary situation.

SDF and BSP

However, just because the expectations of Marxists have so often been unrealistic, they have sometimes obscured the realistic ones. Because the lack of success of Marxists has so often been due to factors beyond their or anyone else's control, they have sometimes overlooked the failures which might have been avoidable. Marx's own failure in the 1860s was inevitable. Historians may well conclude that no conceivable wisdom, tactical brilliance or organisational effort was likely to bring about the realisation of Marx strategic hopes at that point; though this doesn't mean that they were not worth pursuing. On the other hand many of the errors of the British Social Democrats were avoidable, though perhaps historically likely. That peculiar combination of sectarianism and opportunism which Lenin recognised in the SDF, and which is the occupational risk of so many Marxist organisations operating under conditions of capitalist stability, is not inevitable.

The SDF ought to have played a much larger part in the trade union revival of the 1880s, if it had not dismissed trade unions as "mere palliatives"; its own militants were wiser. The British Marxists—with the exception of the SLP—failed to grasp, let alone to lead, the great labour unrest of 1911-1914, though this was the first occasion since the Chartists when masses of rank-and-file British workers not only organised on a large scale, but also demonstrated strong anti-capitalist sentiments, and even some evidence of that revolutionary spirit which Marx had called for. They left the leadership mainly to syndicalists and other members of what we would today call the "new left", though of course many of these—Tom Mann is the best example—had gone through the school of Marxism and were to return to Marxist organisations. The reason for this failure was the opposite to "impossibilist" sectarianism. It was due to the failure to discern a new phase in the political consciousness of the workers behind the emotional phrases, the unorthodox and often rather unimpressive theorising, the irrationalism and what a later generation was to call the "mindless militancy" of the new movement. As it happens the war and the Russian Revolution once again saved the BSP from some of the results of its errors.

Indeed, in a curious way history has time and again compensated, at least in part, for the errors of British Marxists, both by proving Marx right and by demonstrating the inadequacy of the alternatives—whether reformist or revolutionary—which were suggested. It did so by demonstrating, time and again, the fragility of that capitalist system whose stability and strength provided the main argument for both reformists and ultra-revolutionaries. For the reformist argues, with Bernstein and the Fabians, that there was no point in talking about revolution when capitalism looked like lasting for as long as anyone could predict; the only sensible course was to get used to its stability and concentrate on improvements within it. On

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the other hand the ultra-revolutionaries argued, like so many pre-1914 syndicalists, that there was no point in hoping that history would raise the consciousness of the workers to a new level, because historical development seemed to produce capitalist permanence. It made more sense to raise it by the propaganda of action, by inspiring "myths", by the sheer effort of the revolutionary will.

Lessons of History

Both were wrong in their prescriptions, though not entirely wrong in their critique of the "sit-back-and-wait - for - history - to - do - the - job - for - us" determinism of orthodox social democracy. Both were wrong because in one way or another, the instability and the growing contradictions of capitalism have reasserted themselves periodically: e.g. in war, in some form or other of economic disruption, in the growing contradiction between the advanced and the under-developed countries. The very fact that the ultra-left existed and became a significant force was a symptom of the acuteness of these contradictions before 1914, and it is so today. And whenever history once again proved that Marx's analysis of capitalism was a better guide to reality than Rostow's or Galbraith's, or whoever was in fashion at the time, men tended to turn again to the Marxists, in so far as they were neither too sectarian nor too opportunist; that is to say in so far as they avoided the double temptation of revolutionaries who operate for long periods under conditions of stable capitalism.

Learning from Marx's Method

So we may conclude that Marx's influence on British labour could not be expected to be as great as his enthusiastic followers would like it to be. Nevertheless it was, is, and is likely to be, rather greater than both they and the anti-Marxists have often supposed. At the same time it was and is smaller (within the limits of historical realism) than it might have been but for the errors of British Marxists at crucial stages of the development of the modern labour and socialist movement; errors both of the "right" and of the "left"; errors which are not confined to any Marxist organisation, great or small. However, we cannot make Marx himself responsible for them. What both he and Engels had expected of the British labour movement after the Chartist era was modest enough. They had simply expected that it would once again establish itself as an independent *political* as well as trade unionist class movement, that it should found its own political party, and rediscover both the confidence in British workers as a class and the decisive weight of the working class in the politics of Britain. They were too realistic to expect more in their lifetime, and indeed the labour movement did not quite achieve even these modest objectives before Engels's death.

The British Marxists would have done well to listen to Engels's advice, while he was alive, for it was very sound. Nevertheless, even if they had, within a few years of his death the British labour movement had got to a point where Engels's opinions about it, and even less those of Marx who had said so little on the subject after the early 1870s, were no longer of much specific relevance to the situation.

If Marx's theory was to be a guide to action for British Marxists, they would henceforth have to do the work themselves. They would have to learn the *method* of Marx, and not only his text, or that of any of his successors. They would have to make their own analysis of what was happening in British capitalism and of the concrete political situations in which the movement found itself. They would have to work out the best ways to organise, their perspectives and programmes, and their role in the wider labour movement. These are still the tasks of those who wish to follow Marx in Britain, or in any other country.

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On the Centenary of the Birth of James Connolly:

James Connolly (1868-1916) Marxist

C. Desmond Greaves

WHY trouble about centenaries when world history moves with the speed and capacity of a tidal wave? This variant of Henry Ford's celebrated dictum "History is bunk" could come excusably to the lips of a younger generation which has seen remarkable transformation in its own time. Among the middle or older Socialists there is a widespread sense of living in the early years of a new epoch. Many familiar landmarks have gone. Problems once engaging concentrated attention have been summarily solved by life. Others have sprung up, wearing the cloak of intractability with which new difficulties temporarily fool us. For young and old the question arises, what is the underlying change that determines all these appearances? It is palpably a change affecting imperialism. Hence the centenary of a great anti-imperialist of these islands, who lived and lost his life in the struggle, is immediately relevant.

One can speak broadly of the rise of imperialism from its basis in industrial capitalism to its cataclysmic crisis in 1914-1917. Thereafter came a protracted defence. Almost invariably defeated in every direct confrontation, though not without appalling bloodshed, imperialism survived by maintaining its characteristic economic forms by modified political means (neo-colonialism). Over the past few years it has become plain that that very defensive system has run into its own crisis, and the world-wide effects of the change are manifesting themselves in new mass struggles. The new challenge can only be met by the continuous development of creative Marxism assimilating and interpreting new experiences.

Early Years

The life of James Connolly covered the first of the two periods above distinguished, when history posed as many and as seemingly hard problems as it does today. It was his title to be recognised as a great Marxist that he was able to bring creative as well as critical analysis to bear on them.

James Connolly was born on June 5th, 1868, in a part of the slums of Edinburgh known as "little Ireland". Reared in grinding poverty, he worked at dead-end jobs until, like most of his generation, he could pass himself off as old enough for the army. After enlistment he was posted to Cork, and spent the following seven years in different parts of Ireland, then in the throes of the great "Land war".

He left the army in 1889, lived for a short while in Dundee before his marriage to a Dublin girl in Perth, and finally settled for the following six years in Edinburgh. It was while he was in Dundee that he joined the Scottish Socialist Federation (the Scottish equivalent of the re-united Social Democratic Federation) and during his stay in Edinburgh he steadily advanced to a leading position in that organisation. After standing for the local council as the first socialist candidate in the City's history, he was victimised and undertook full-time work for the Edinburgh branch. A trade depression weakened its financial strength, and he found himself unable to make a living. For a while he contemplated emigration to Chile, but decided against it on receiving an invitation from Dublin to become paid organiser for the small Socialist group then established there.

Arriving in Dublin in 1896 he succeeded in convincing the Dublin men that Irish Socialism must of necessity stand for national independence, and the Irish Socialist Republican Party was born. He and his colleagues founded a weekly newspaper, and conducted a campaign against the Boer War which received publicity throughout Europe. Trade depression once more hitting the comrades' pockets, Connolly undertook lengthy lecture tours in England and Scotland in which he increasingly identified himself with the left dissidents who were critical of the opportunist policy of H. M. Hyndman within the SDF.

Influence of De Leon

On a brief visit to the United States he came under the influence of Daniel De Leon, and on his return worked for the split in the SDF and the establishment of the Socialist Labour Party. Connolly presided over its first congress in Edinburgh and was employed as its full-time organiser for a space of a few months.

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Once again, for economic reasons, he was compelled to relinquish the post, and after qualifying as a Linotype operator emigrated to the United States in 1903, sending for his family as soon as he was established.

There, he rapidly came into conflict with the leftist dogmatism of De Leon, who had seemed more sufferable at a distance, the main issues of difference being in relation to wages (De Leon supported Proudhon's "iron law of wages"), marriage (the *Weekly People* published articles forecasting the disappearance of the monogamic family), and the church (the SLP toyed with obligatory atheism on the Bakunin model). To these issues was added that of the race associations, De Leon opposing the establishment of distinct organisations for immigrants of various nationalities. Connolly had founded the Irish Socialist Federation.

As a result of these differences Connolly left the SLP and after a period as a full-time worker for the Industrial Workers of the World (the so-called "wobblies") became a travelling organiser for the Socialist Party of America.

Return to Ireland

As a result of the rising tide of working-class struggle in Ireland led by Larkin, Connolly returned to Ireland in 1910. He became full-time organiser of the Socialist Party of Ireland (a descendant of the ISRP) and later Belfast secretary of the newly-founded Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. It was his resolution at the 1912 annual meeting of the Irish TUC which established the Irish Labour Party. Owing to the imprisonment of Larkin the main daily leadership of the great Transport Lock-out of 1913-14 fell on Connolly, and during its process he founded the Irish Citizen Army as a workers' defence force, subsequently developing it as an independent working-class national revolutionary military force. At the outbreak of the First World War, when Larkin left for America (and could not get back), Connolly became Acting General Secretary of the Union.

Against Imperialist War

Connolly persuaded the leadership of the Irish TUC and Labour Party to adopt the position of the Basle and Stuttgart Manifestos against the imperialist war, and developed a line of policy parallel to that of Lenin but corresponding to the needs of the movement in a dependent nation. Instead of urging the conversion of the imperialist war into a civil war against the capitalist class, he urged its conversion into a national war for liberation from the imperialist oppressor. In this he failed to draw the majority of the working class. But the Citizen Army joined forces with the left wing of the Irish Volunteers, and Connolly became a member of the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

He signed the celebrated Proclamation of 1916 which declared Ireland an Independent Republic, and during the Easter Rising, which began on April 24th, he commanded the rebel forces in Dublin, when a far superior British force was held at bay for a week. Wounded, he was nevertheless propped up in bed for court martial, and, since he could not stand, was shot sitting in a chair on May 12th, 1916.

Such was his life. Its bare rehearsal disposes of the periodic attempts, repeated even today, to represent Connolly as a humanitarian social reformer and "friend of the poor". He was one of the poor himself, and the refrain to one of his songs summarised his attitude as such. It runs: "We only want the earth." Of the leftist criticism advanced by Sean O'Casey that Connolly's participation in the Rising was an abandonment of Socialism, more will be said later, since it must be judged against the development of Connolly's ideas.

Class Struggle

At the heart of Marxism is the concept of the class struggle, the ceaseless conflict between those who do and do not own the principal means of production. This not only expresses itself in industrial, social and political antagonisms, but permeates every sphere of cultural and intellectual life, and can only end with the victory of the exploited and the end of exploitation. The immediacy with which Connolly embraced this doctrine, the moment it was scientifically presented to him, is a measure of his previous experience in two widely contrasted arenas, namely the slums of Edinburgh and the Ireland of the Land League.

Connolly expressed his understanding of the class principle throughout his life. In its simplest form it showed in his constant trade union activity and Socialist propaganda. The main textbooks of his early years were the *Communist Manifesto*, *Wage Labour and Capital*, *Value Price and Profit* (all of Marx), and the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels. He was an avid reader of *Justice* (to which he contributed) and other socialist periodicals.

His starting point was that of the Second International, founded in 1889, the year when he joined the SSF. This was organisationally broad but founded on Marxism. The Edinburgh branch opposed the admission of the anarchists to the London Congress of 1896. Thereafter Connolly took a deep interest in the doings of the International Movement. The ISRP opposed Millerandism and criticised the "Kautsky Resolution" at the Paris

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Congress of 1900, and his adherence to the Basle and Stuttgart resolutions has already been noted.

Like many others, however, confronted by the development of revisionism within the Second International, for a time he sought restlessly for a formula which would be firm enough to maintain Marxist principles and flexible enough to solve the new problems crowding in as a result of the development of imperialism on a world scale. For a time he toyed with syndicalism, his pamphlet *Socialism Made Easy* (prepared initially for the IWW) showing his most extreme point in that direction. His conflict with De Leon led him slowly to discard the neo-Bakuninist crudities then widely current, and to move in the direction of Leninism. But he never achieved the conception of the "party of a new type" nor did he have the opportunity of presenting systematically his profounder understanding of the state, which appears implicitly in his last writings.

His dictum "less theorising and more fighting" has been misrepresented as approval for narrow practicalism. Practical he certainly was. Throughout the last stage of preparations for the rising he was constantly fighting wage-struggles. But he also theorised plentifully at the same time. His protest was against the barren introspective theorising of the De Leonites, not the fruitful theory which is at once a summary of and a commentary on experience.

Internationalism

At an early stage he applied the principle of proletarian internationalism to relations between the British and Irish peoples. Connolly held that Irish and British working people (with whom he included the peasantry) had common exploiters, whose power to exploit was guaranteed by the British Imperial Government, and that they therefore had a common interest in ending that power.

Thus in his election address in 1894 he wrote:

> "The landlord who grinds his peasants on a Connemara estate and the landlord who rackrents them in a Cowgate slum are brethren in fact and deed . . . the Liberal Government which supplies police to Irish landlords to aid them in the work of exterminating the Irish peasantry, also imports police into Scotland to aid Scottish mine-owners in their work of starving the Scottish miners."

Marx's letters on the Irish question only became generally known when they were published in *Neue Zeit*. But Hyndman apart (who advocated partition when Gladstone introduced his 1886 Home Rule Bill), the SDF was solidly pro-Irish and Michael Davitt spoke regularly on its platforms. Sketchley's pamphlet was a classical presentation of the conception of an alliance of the peoples of the two countries. Before he became a socialist Connolly had been steeped in Irish national tradition, which had its own independent line of internationalist development stretching back beyond Wolfe Tone and the French revolution to Owen Roe O'Neill and the English.

To this principle of the indivisibility of popular interest he appealed frequently during his tours in Britain. The idea occurs in *Labour in Irish History*, his theoretical masterpiece, and in his writings in *Forward*. The success of the right-wing trade union leaders (notably J. H. Thomas) in wrecking the solidarity movement of the British workers in 1913-14 bitterly oppressed him and he confessed to "that tired feeling" when he heard their many good reasons why nothing could be done to support the Dublin workers against the employers' offensive. But nevertheless he attended the Glasgow May Day meeting in 1915 and delivered one of the classical revolutionary speeches of history.

Leadership of the National Movement

Of great influence on Connolly were the debates and discussions on the Irish question which took place in the Edinburgh SDF in the period after the fall of Parnell. The initiative came from John Leslie whose articles in *Justice* were republished as a pamphlet. The prospect of federal Home Rule and a consequent gradual evolution to complete independence seemed to have been suddenly eliminated. Who was to blame? Leslie developed the idea that the Irish middle class were a reserve of imperialism and not one of the popular forces in Ireland.

I have heard it suggested in Edinburgh (without substantiating evidence) that Leslie took much from Connolly in this, rather than the reverse. It is certainly true that Connolly expounded the doctrine throughout his life, and developed it into one of the central ideas of his *Labour and Irish History*. What seems most likely, however, is that the ideas of the many Irish in the Edinburgh SDF branch were pooled in the discussion and that Leslie, as the most developed thinker and writer made the running. Certainly, Connolly's work was a classical presentation of the role played by the property question in Irish history.

National Struggle and Socialist Revolution

Throughout his career in Ireland, and indeed in so far as it was possible in Britain and the USA, Connolly conducted a struggle for a transfer of the leadership of the Irish independence movement from the bourgeois and bourgeoisified-landlord Irish National League and Parliamentary Party, to the working class.

It is from this point that Connolly's thought took its leap of genius which makes him a figure

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of world importance. For what he derived from the conception of the defection of the bourgeoisie in the new period (which was the epoch of imperialism) was something which he expressed in many different ways, but which today is expressed in the conception that the national liberation struggle has become a part of the socialist, and no longer part of the bourgeois, revolution. This thought was given formal enunciation by Lenin, but repeatedly one finds Connolly foreshadowing conceptions which Lenin (whose writings were unknown to Connolly) presented in fully-developed form.

It was precisely this conception that O'Casey lacked when he criticised Connolly's participation in 1916. It was because Connolly had it that he was able to interpret the Basle manifesto and join with those who brought Ireland into the international revolutionary struggle. In one of his last articles Connolly writes of the "two stages of freedom", the first in which capitalists who offer unconditional adherence to the independent Republic will not have their property immediately confiscated, and a second stage when social reorganisation will be undertaken. The Proclamation which is said to have been drafted by Pearse and revised by Connolly and MacDonagh has such clear implications of the *sovereignty of the people*, that it seems impossible that Connolly cannot have had this conception in mind.

Role of the Trade Unions

Hence arises the further principle that the Irish working class should build up its independent organisations, and strive for the leadership of the national struggle, aiming at all times to imbue that struggle with socialist content.

In the absence of the concept of a "party of a new type", two organisations were seen as vehicles of this purpose. First there were the trade unions. Connolly was scathingly critical of such "advanced nationalists" as Arthur Griffith who imagined that Irish national freedom could be furthered by crushing the resistance of the locked-out workers of 1913-14. Again and again he urged on his allies of the IRB the supreme importance of the trade unions. He adumbrated the conception of a revolution beginning with sporadic economic strikes and developing into the mass political strike. He was aware of the history of the Russian revolution of 1905, and no doubt drew inspiration from that source. When it was clear that the mass of the workers were indisposed to follow the Executive of the ITUC and LP on the matter of the war, he was thrown back on the ITGWU. When differences developed with its leading committee (which included some moderate men) he was thrown back on the Citizen Army. But the principle never changed.

In this connection may be mentioned his foreshadowing of the conception of neo-colonialism:

> "If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the socialist republic, your efforts will be vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and industrialists institutions she has planted in this country. . . ."

Socialism and National Independence

Connolly concluded that consequently all forms of socialist policy which did not include the national independence struggle were retrograde, whether in Ireland or in Britain, for they denied to Irish socialism its essential pre-requisite.

He fought this battle long and hard. He fought it against the ILP cosmopolitans over the programme of the ISRP. He fought it against the British labour leaders who talked international socialism one moment and entered into Parliamentary alliances with the INL the next. He fought it in a series of classical polemics in *Forward* against the "gas and water" socialist William Walker who pointed proudly to that apex of public enterprise the Belfast police band. Walker, who found it quite possible to conceive of socialism under a monarchy, was opposed to the establishment of a distinct Irish Labour Party on grounds of "international brotherhood".

It was no accident, of course, that Walker left the labour movement for a post under the National Insurance Act. Or that the right-wing trade union leaders, most of the Fabians, and Hyndman's followers in the SDF all applauded the international fratricide of 1914. Or that Arthur Henderson was a member of the War Cabinet which could have saved Connolly but chose not to do so.

Today we are familiar with this line up. It is the line-up between right and left, and runs like a thread through all working-class history, ever since imperialism was able to split the movement by bribing a privileged section and setting it against the interests of the whole.

The Forces of the National Revolution

Some consequential results of Connolly's thought may be mentioned in conclusion. These are based on the need for the unity of the alliance of forces needed for the carrying through of the national revolution and the economic reorganisation that follows it.

While publishing a brilliant defence of historical materialism in "Labour, Nationality and Religion"

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in reply to the strictures upon Socialism offered by a Catholic priest, Connolly consistently refused to be drawn into any form of crude anti-clericalism. In a country where the Catholic religion has been for centuries the religion of an oppressed class, its priests hounded and persecuted, and the faithful to this day blatantly discriminated against in a part of Ireland, this was manifestly absurd.

Likewise, having lived through the Land League days, he stood for "the land for the people" and the subsequent development of co-operation, rather than for the "nationalisation of the land" then popular in Britain.

Of the Irish language he was whole-heartedly for preservation, restoration and development. In a significant article written in America, he equated the physical conquests of imperialism with the cultural and linguistic conquests, and likened cosmopolitan contempt for the language and culture of small and subject nations to the hypocritical justification of robbery on the spurious grounds of internationalism. His book *Labour in Irish History* in which he shows how the invasion of Ireland first introduced feudal forms of property and paved the way for the invasion of capitalist forms, he described as part of the literature of the Gaelic revival. He was the first to present the material basis for the instinctive wish of every Irishman. For the same reason he sought the development of all forms of native culture, songs, dance, poetry and sport.

But throughout he insisted that Irish socialism should have an international policy in conformity with its national objectives, and derived both nationalism and internationalism from the one principle of democracy.

His Contribution to Marxism

From the above it can be seen that Connolly made a real and lasting contribution to international Marxism, and in particular to Marxism in these islands.

At a time when it is common to hear the so-called "race question" discussed without mention of neo-colonialism, it is worth remembering that in Connolly's day many British workers could not bring themselves to forgive the Irish for what their ruling class had done to Ireland. Anti-Irish riots were well known on the fringe of the Edinburgh ghetto. Some problems which look new, are not so new. But the one thing which will bring all sections together, promote peace, concord, and "integration" in its true and best sense, is the knowledge of a common enemy and of what that common enemy is.

The form imperialism outwardly presents (though not its inward essence) has undergone some changes. But the one enemy remains. Knowledge of that fact, once it becomes the possession of the masses, can lay the basis for solving many problems, both national and international which for the moment wear their most refractory aspect. The life work and thought of Connolly the Marxist will inspire, stimulate and guide.

James Connolly— Trade Unionist

Betty Sinclair

Secretary, Belfast and District Trades Union Council, writing in her personal capacity

"There is indeed much to be done before we can claim that the guarantee (the Proclamation of 1916 to the Irish people) has been fulfilled. If we refuse to undertake its fulfilment, we would have to share the reproach directed by James Connolly against those who bubble over with enthusiasm for Ireland but witness unmoved the sufferings of so many of our people." (*An Taoiseach de Valera, April 24th, 1933, speaking on Easter Week.*)

DE VALERA spoke well and truly of the greatest man who ever lived in Ireland, who was a Marxist Socialist, worthy product of a militant trade union movement of Scotland, the United States of America and Ireland. The latter became his adopted country, through kinship and identity of interests. And for Ireland and her people he made the final sacrifice. How far De Valera and the Irish people honoured Connolly and his teachings must be judged by the reminder given by De Valera in 1933 and by the fact that, thirty-five years later, his work and teachings are still, in a

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large measure, being deliberately disregarded, distorted or ignored.

But, in this year 1968, when Irishmen and women commemorate the 100th anniversary of his birth, after having, in 1966, paid homage to his ultimate sacrifice in 1916, those who have done their damndest to discredit Connolly are being forced to witness a serious revival of his teachings and are alarmed that he is now being acknowledged as the man, head and shoulders above all others, who understood best what was necessary for the Irish working class.

Early Experiences

Connolly's many years of struggle in the trade union and labour movement of Scotland—where he worked as a carter—for better conditions for the workers and to end their exploitation gave him an invaluable insight into the minds and motives of the capitalist class. He acted and wrote tirelessly to prove that nationality counted for little with the capitalists who employed, or fired, workers. His period in the British Army taught him that the armed forces of an imperialist state constituted a bulwark against the aspirations of a people whose only wish was to be free from imperialist domination and exploitation.

When he came to Ireland in 1896 and later was forced to emigrate to the United States of America he found no difficulty in recognising where his place was and never shirked the struggle—despite his poverty and the needs of his wife and young family. Many there were who went to the United States with one idea in mind—to do well for themselves and to leave behind, for ever, the bitter memories of hard times and privation. But not James Connolly. He became very much attracted to the idea of the "One Big Union" and charged that "the real truth is that workers do not unite industrially, but, on the contrary, are most hopelessly divided on the industrial field, and that their division and confusion on the political field are the direct result of their division and confusion on the industrial field". (*Axe to the Root.*)

This pamphlet was written by Connolly whilst he was in New York and after he had witnessed a broken strike on the subway and elevated system by ". . . men who were engineers in the power-houses which supplied the electric power to run the cars . . . good union men with union cards in their pockets . . . and without whom all the scabs combined could not have run a single trip" (*ibid*). Like Jack London, he hated scabs and said of them, ". . . he was a vile creature" . . . and, what else, he asked, "are the trade unionists who supplied the power to the scabs to help them to break a strike" (*ibid*). Connolly did not mince his words.

Connolly's life in Scotland taught him the basics of industrial and political struggle. His experiences in the United States of America—the other rising imperialist power—deepened his knowledge and when he came back to Ireland in 1910 he never spared himself in his efforts to explain to the Irish workers, Catholic and Protestant, the real issues. He went to the root of the problems, social, economic, political and national, facing the country. Having worked as an organiser in New York for IWW (the Wobblies) and founded there, in 1907, the Irish Socialist Federation, with its journal, *The Harp*, Connolly was already preparing himself for his future work in Ireland.

Irish Transport and General Workers' Union

He returned to Ireland in 1910 to become the organiser of the Socialist Party of Ireland and then to join "Big Jim" Larkin in the task of building up the "one big union", the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. In that year he also wrote his most famous book—*Labour in Irish History*—in which he traced, down through the centuries, the struggles of the Irish people and stated, without any qualifications, that the Irish working class must finish the task—the Irish bourgeoisie would never be fit, able or anxious to do it. The "men of property", he claimed, had always deserted and betrayed the people. The "men of no property", i.e. the working class must take up and finish the struggle.

He came to Belfast in 1911. He found that, following the great dockers' and carters' strike led by James Larkin, a new wind circulated through the North. For the first time, in the worst-paid of all jobs, men were given the dignity of men and, for the first time, they began to identify themselves as Irishmen and part of the Irish working class. Larkin, in a way never accomplished before, united the workers of Belfast and became, for the employers of the North and the orthodox British trade union officials, a thorn in their flesh. Larkin was disowned by the National Union of Dock Labourers, by whom he was employed. Their joy was short-lived with the formation of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, led by Larkin.

The joy became even less noticeable when Connolly arrived to take up the post of Ulster organiser for the Union. The Belfast *Morning News* wrote in October 6th that year:

> "James Connolly attempts to introduce the principle of syndicalism into Belfast Trades Unionism by recruiting women workers in the linen industry to his Union standard. All that need be said is that if the trade unionism of Belfast does not purge itself of Larkinism it will end in its own undoing."

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Connolly had lost no time, after coming to Belfast, in having his Union affiliated to the Belfast and District Trades Union Council—September 7th, 1911. On January 4th, 1912, he was elected to the Executive Committee and remained a member until he went to Dublin early in 1914 permanently.

The Need to Organise

By October 1911, he was able to report to the Council that ". . . at the lower docks they had held up 20 ships to enforce trade union conditions". In March 1912, the Belfast dockers had obtained wage advances of 3s. per week. He spoke for the bakers who were on strike, supported the Insurance Bill of the Lloyd George Government and strongly deprecated the role of the Irish Nationalist Party who had asked that the provisions of the Bill be not extended to Ireland, and flayed the British Labour Party for not supporting the Irish Workers' demand. Connolly said,

> ". . . . as far as the Labour Party is concerned, Ireland is not recognised at all. We support the British Labour Party, but that Party invariably give us the kick, and as far as I am concerned the Irish working classes have not my sympathy as long as they refrain from respecting themselves and establishing a Labour Party of their own."

Connolly fought for good public transport for the Belfast workers, reported that his Union had been able to win an eight-hour day for transport workers (December 5th, 1912), that textile workers had affiliated to the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union and had decided to ask for a Trade Board and a minimum wage of 3d. per hour. His Union had also decided to contest the local Municipal Elections. He was chosen as the candidate and polled 900 votes.

Employers "Orange" and "Green"

Constantly he campaigned against what he terms "Orange" and "Green" employers. In his article, written for *The Forward* on March 11th, 1911, "Sweatshops Behind the Orange Flag", he pointed out that "the enemies of Home Rule and Popery were also enemies . . . of low rents and sanitary cottages for their labourers", evidenced that the Home Rule Party and "the Ulster beaters of the Orange Drum" were united in attempting to prevent the passing of an Act for the feeding of necessitous schoolchildren and asserted that "the cries of the starving children of Ulster cannot pierce the loyal ears" of the Protestant employers of Belfast.

This was a period when the linen industry was in its ascendancy in Ireland—particularly in Ulster. Work done by women in their homes was sheer and brutal exploitation. For thread-drawing pure linen handkerchiefs, 1d. a dozen was paid, and only six dozen could be drawn in a very hard day's work. A widow, with seven children, could earn, at the most, 4s. a week at hand-spoke work. The "munificent" sum of ¾d. was paid for clipping threads on an elaborately embroidered bedspread, 88 ins. by 100 ins.—and it took one hour to do that work. He was especially vehement about the exploitation of women and girls and, in 1913, addressed a manifesto *To the Linen Slaves of Belfast*. In the manifesto he described many Belfast mills "as slaughterhouses for women and penitentiaries for the children". When women workers went on strike at the biggest textile mill in Belfast, the York Street Flax Spinning Company, they came to Connolly for assistance. He told them: "I will try to organise you for this strike because you can do nothing unless you are organised."

Connolly taught the women how to defy the employers, how to get rid of the iniquitous fines system, to win higher piece rates and to demand a competent woman inspector for the proper inspection of the mills and factories. His appeal to women textile workers: "Sisters and Fellow-Workers. . . . Be Brave. . . . Have confidence in yourselves. Talk about success and you will achieve success" was not lost on the women who marched back into the biggest mill in Ireland singing at the tops of their voices where before they had not been allowed to "waste time" talking.

Connolly had come to work in Belfast (and Ulster) under the most unfavourable conditions as far as political understanding of the Irish question was concerned. He learnt well of the bad conditions in the city, the almost complete lack of social services, the long hours and low wages. Even as late as November 1915, engineering workers reported that men in the Sirocco Works were being paid from 10s. to 20s. for a week's work. In Coombe Barbour's 17s. to 20s. and Mackies Foundry were paying the same scandalous wages. Trade Unionists complained that workers were forced to wear Government badges when they were employed on munitions and the "patriotic firms" were flying the Union Jack! In the Springfield Cotton Spinning Mill, engaged on Government work for war purposes, women worked a 55½-hour week for the princely sum of 10s. 6d. Those who worked overtime from 6 p.m. to 9. p.m. received the miserly sum of 8d. extra. The workers were learning the truth of Connolly's teachings—that Protestant employers do not pay "Protestant wages". The same went for Catholic employers. The old Adam in them demanded profits and more profits and these could not be obtained unless workers were paid low wages and exploitation speeded up.

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Battle Joined in Dublin

Connolly left Belfast to continue his trade union work in Dublin. He was drawn there in 1913 to assist in the greatest industrial battle in Ireland's history. He found, in the capital city of Ireland, the same "Green" and "Orange" employers. Martin Murphy and the 400 Dublin employers had thrown down the gauntlet—either the workers employed by them ceased to be members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union or else they be paid off. They, the employers, accused the Union of fomenting industrial strife and Connolly, writing in the *Irish Worker* (August 30th, 1913) replied:

> "The fault of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. What is it? Let us tell it in plain language. It's fault is this, that it found the labourers of Ireland on their knees, and has striven to raise them to an erect position of manhood: it found them with all the vices of slavery in their souls, and it strove to eradicate these vices and replace them with some of the virtues of free men; it found them with no other weapons of defence than the arts of the liar, the lickspittle, and the toady, and it combined them and taught them to abhor those arts and rely proudly on the defensive power of combination . . . out of this class of slaves the labourers of Dublin the Union has created an army of intelligent self-reliant men . . . trusting alone to the disciplined use of their power to labour or withdraw their labour to assert and maintain their right as men."

Connolly explained that all the educational agencies of the country had been used to teach the working class of Dublin that

> "this world has been created for the special benefit of the various sections of the master class, that kings and lords and capitalists were of value . . . but that there was neither honour, credit nor consideration to the man or woman who toils to maintain them all."

He asserted that those who toil are the only ones who matter and that the others are "but beggars upon the bounty of those who work with hand or brain". He refused to shrink from the threat of Murphy and the 400 employers. "Let them understand", he wrote, "that once they start the ball rolling no capitalist power on earth can prevent it continuing to roll, that every day will add to the impetus it will give to the working-class purpose. . . ."

The battle was joined. All members of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union were summarily dismissed. All the force and might of the Irish and British imperialist authorities were brought together to crush the leaders of the Irish working class, James Connolly and Jim Larkin, to crush the Union and, most important of all, crush the Irish working class, for ever. Between August 1913 and October 4th of the same year when Connolly put the case for the workers before the Asquith Inquiry, held in Dublin Castle, the city of Dublin became an armed camp.

British imperialism was perfecting its arrangements to go to war with imperialist Germany, but it did not hesitate to assist the Irish employers in their efforts to crush the workers of Ireland. It was all part of the one huge struggle—to maintain the Empire and continue to draw imperial tribute from the oldest—Ireland—and the newest colonies to be won when the world was plunged into war just one year after war had been declared on the Irish working class.

"Elevate Our Class"

When Connolly made his case before the Inquiry, he stated:

> "We do not claim to be philanthropists labouring to preserve social amenities for the sake of some nebulous, changing thing known as 'the public'. We do not pretend to be animated by a fierce zeal for public order, though we hope we shall never wantonly disturb it, nor do we profess to be inspired by a single-minded desire to aid capitalists to conduct their business at all costs. No, we are banded together for the purpose of elevating our class, of organising that class for the conquest of its rights. If the public, the forces of law and order and the capitalist class are willing to co-operate with us towards that end, well and good. If, on the other hand, the social and political forces represented by these three terms unite to defeat and subdue us and to thwart our aspirations as we believe they have done in this case, we shall still press onwards believing that eventually victory and the verdict of history will be on our side."

The Dublin employers prevaricated and in the month of December 1913, Thomas MacPartlin, Chairman, Workers' Representation, was forced to declare, ". . . Under these circumstances the fight must go on . . . to defeat the ill-will . . . the malice . . . the vindictiveness, the passions and the prejudices of the employers who four months ago set out to starve us into submission, and to drive us back to slavery".

A proposal, made by kindly people in Britain, to take Dublin's starving children into their homes and to feed and clothe them was denounced by a cleric, described by Connolly as, ". . . One scoundrel in clerical garb (who) is said to have stated that the children were being 'brought to England by trickery, fraud and corruption for proselytising purposes' " and Connolly thundered, "Nothing more venomous and unfounded was ever spewed out of a lying mouth in Ireland since the seoinin clergy at the bidding of an English politician hounded Parnell to his grave". An appeal to his Grace, Archbishop Walsh, by Mrs. Montefiore to give his blessing to

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the children being allowed to travel, coupled with assurances that the spiritual needs of the children would be looked after, went unanswered.

A public appeal by Connolly towards the same end was ignored. Even though Connolly, close to the workers and witnessing their terrible sufferings and privations, told his Grace that the master class of Dublin ". . . calmly and cold-bloodedly were using the sufferings of the children to weaken the resistance of the parents", the appeal was to have no effect. The children's souls must be looked after, even if their bodies were being starved by good Dublin Catholic and Protestant employers. Connolly requested Archbishop Walsh—who was to condemn the 1916 Insurrection and all who took part in it—to assist in bringing the powers of the press, public opinion and all the agencies at his command to bear upon "the inhuman monsters who controlled employment in Dublin".

Solidarity—and Betrayal

The arrest of pickets and organisers went on. The starvation of the workers and their children continued. An appeal to the British Trades Union Congress resulted, once again, in the right of free speech in the streets of Dublin. Supplies of food, in specially chartered ships, and a huge amount of money arrived to help keep the struggle going. Connolly stated that the working-class movement of Britain reached its highest point of moral grandeur, "attained for a moment to a realisation of that sublime unity towards which the best in us continually aspire". Connolly wrote so in the *Forward*, February 9th, 1914, after the workers of Dublin had been defeated in their struggle. They were forced back on any terms possible and on March 14th, 1914, Connolly analysed the reason:

> "The Dublin fighters received their defeat, met their Waterloo, at the London Conference of December 9th, 1913. At that Conference the representatives of organised labour declared they would not counsel the use of any kind of economic force or industrial action in support of the Dublin workers, and immediately this was known, the fight was virtually lost. At the next Peace Conference in Dublin the employers would not even look at the joint proposals of the representatives of the British and Irish Unions. They knew they had nothing to fear, as their opponents in the labour camp had solemnly promised not to hurt them."

Connolly (and Larkin) wanted the trade union movement, and especially the transport unions, of Britain to "isolate the capitalist class of Dublin". Connolly showed that if the capitalist is able to carry on his business without the strikers, then the strike is lost, even if the strikers receive more in strike pay than they formerly did in wages. They, and the Dublin workers, were fully appreciative of the offer to house the starving children, the food ships and money *but what was really wanted was to completely close the port of Dublin—and every exit and egress in Ireland.* What was wanted, as Connolly stated, was that the Irish capitalists would be starved (of profits) into submission to grant the modest demands of the workers, especially the right to belong to the Union of their choice and not to allow the workers and their families to be starved (for food) into submitting to the employers of Dublin, once characterised by Connolly as the "most stupid employers in the world".

But appeals to the leaders of the National Union of Railwaymen, to Mr. James Sexton's National Union of Dockers (who had quarrelled with Larkin), Mr. Havelock Wilson's National Union of Seamen, and the leaders of the Seamen and Firemen's Union, as well as Mr. Joe Houghton of the Scottish Docker's Union were of no avail. The leaders refused to hold up the goods and raw materials coming into and going out of Ireland. Connolly charged, with justification, that "the officials failed to grasp the opportunity offered to them to make a permanent reality of the union of working-class forces. . . ." He claimed that ". . . sectionalism, intrigues, and old-time jealousies damned us in the hour of victory, and officialism was the first to fall to the tempter" (*Forward*, February 9th, 1914).

For the first time Connolly appeared to despair. He concluded his article thus:

> "And so we Irish workers must go down into Hell, bow our backs to the lash of the slave-driver, let our hearts be seared by the iron of his hatred, and instead of the sacramental wafer of brotherhood and common sacrifice, eat the dust of defeat and betrayal. Dublin is isolated."

The Lessons of Dublin

But Connolly was too great, in mind, heart and soul, to be thus thrust down or to give up the battle. Before the month of February 1914 was out he was penning articles on "the lessons of Dublin" and putting forward ever more sharply his case for working-class unity, for the sympathetic strike; his demand for industrial unionism; the organisation of all workers in any one industry into a union covering that industry; the need to link up all such unions under one head which, he stated, was a different thing from mere amalgamation of unions. He called on the Irish working class to work for trade union organisation that would unite, instead of divide, the workers and for the abolition of all executives "whose measure of success is the balance-sheet of the union, instead of the power of their class".

On May 9th, 1914, he was able to write: "I am glad of the experience of the past few years. I am

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glad that the extremely doctrinaire political attitude towards strikes received a check, and that check came straight out of the practical experience of the workers in ship, shore, shop and railway." He maintained: ". . . that in the long run the class in control of the economic forces of the nation will be able to direct its political powers . . . the mere right to vote will not protect the workers."

The Socialist Challenge

When war broke out in August 1914, Connolly immediately nailed his colours to the mast. He was opposed to the war. He was much dismayed and disappointed when the "socialists" of Europe, whom he said had been passing resolutions against such a war, betrayed the peoples of their countries. After the 1915 annual meeting of the British Trades Union Congress he declared, in the *Workers' Republic* (September 18th):

> "We have ere looked hopefully to the British Trade Union Congress, but our hopes are gone. The British Empire is ruled by the most astute ruling class in the world; the British working class is the most easily fooled in the world. God help the poor Irish as long as they remain yoked to such a combination."

And so the man who had fought all his life, in Scotland, in the United States of America, chose Ireland in order to prove that there were revolutionary socialists in the world who would challenge the imperialists and their war; that there were men and women in the trade union movement whose understanding that there must be a link between trade union activity and politics would give them courage to stand and fight. Connolly did not know of the struggle being waged by Lenin and his comrades, although he did know that Tsarism would not be able to stand up against the hatred of the millions of Russians and other peoples bowed down by autocracy and the knout.

"The Cause of Labour is the Cause of Ireland"

And he set out to prove that Socialism was a living thing and that there were Socialists who would remain true to their word. To prove that there was a working class, whose leaders had not betrayed them, who would come to the clarion call of the struggle for a new society. He set out to prove that British imperialism was not invincible and that Irish men and women could begin the conflagration that would topple monarchs and bring down empires. James Connolly set out to redeem the good name of Socialism and, in the process, lead the Irish working class into a new civilisation.

His last article, written in the *Workers' Republic*, April 8th, 1916 (and before his last statement delivered to a field general court martial on May 9th, 1916—three days before his execution by the British imperialists and for whose death Martin Murphy and the 400 employers of Dublin screamed) breathed his every belief in the Irish working class. He declared:

> "We are out for Ireland for the Irish. But who are the Irish? Not the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; not the sweating, profit-grinding capitalist; not the sleek and oily lawyer; not the prostitute pressmen—the hired liars of the enemy. Not these are the Irish upon whom the future depends. Not these, but the Irish working class, the only secure foundation upon which a free nation can be reared. The cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland is the cause of labour."

Others will describe how, out of 1907 and 1913, great industrial struggles in Ireland—one fought in Belfast under the leadership of Larkin and the other in Dublin under the leadership of Connolly and Larkin—grew the men and women who fought in 1916 to free their class and country and who gave the impetus, as Connolly prophesied they would, to those who found the courage to struggle through "the four glorious years"—from 1916 to 1920 and to be able to wrest 26 of the 32 counties from direct political rule by Great Britain.

And What of Today?

But does our movement today share, as De Valera stated in 1933, the "reproach directed by James Connolly against those who bubble over with enthusiasm for Ireland but witness unmoved the sufferings of so many of her people". No one denies that advances have been made. The Irish Trade Union movement has, despite the political difficulties of a divided country, been able to heal the breach and, after 14 years of disunity within the movement, from 1945 to 1959, come together, over 500,000 strong in the united Irish Congress of Trade Unions. The political force of Toryism in Northern Ireland was not able to prevail against the overwhelming desire for unity.

But Connolly would be demanding to know the reason why, in the Irish Republic, over 50 per cent of all male industrial workers and over 90 per cent of female workers have less than £12 a week; why male industrial workers in Northern Ireland receive, in earnings £3 to £4 per week less than their counterparts in Britain, although they are supposed to be "British" in every sense. He would want to know why it is that some right-wing leaders in the trade union movement condemn the "sympathetic strike", the cornerstone of Connolly's policy, demand that workers "pass the picket", deny Connolly's slogan "an injury to one is an injury to all", press for the means of hamstringing

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the militant working class, and co-operate with the "inhuman monsters" in their so-called "economic planning".

Connolly would not remain silent, nor would he hesitate to use industrial action, to end the unemployment and emigration that Ireland, North and South, has suffered to the extent that more of her native-born live in other countries than Ireland; to end the dreadful housing conditions that afflict the majority of the population in both parts of the country, an education system that forces children in the Irish Republic to leave school at the tender age of 14 years and denies them the right to secondary education. James Connolly would wish to see the might of the movement used in order to take up with the British Government, the British Labour Party and the British Trades Union Congress the continued injustice done to his country by the continuation of partition, which weakens Ireland, and places the whole country into a position where Britain is able to carry out a policy of neo-colonialism even in that part which has political freedom.

We still have the rack-renting, slum-owning landlord; the sweating and profit-grinding capitalist . . . not only of Irish and British nationality. We have, in our midst, North and South, these forces from America, France, Japan, West Germany, etc. Connolly wanted to be rid of the Irish and English variety—he, if he lived today, would be more than ever keen to get rid of the capitalists of the nations whom he hoped to help to topple when he went out in 1916.

We know the struggle is not yet finished. But James Connolly has left us an example of work and struggle that will help us on our way. He also left us a treasure house in his writings that enables us to see things for what they are with the aid of which to encourage the Irish working class to go on to victory.

> "To speed the day the world awaits when Labour long oppressed,
> Shall rise and strike for freedom true, and from the tyrants wrest—
> The power they have abused so long. Oh, ever glorious deed.
> The crowning point of history, yet child of bitterest need.
> Ah, woe is me, thy father's eyes will not behold that day,
> I faint and die; child, hold my hand,
> Keep-thou-my- Leg-a-cy."

And we will keep his Legacy.

"Labour in Irish History"

A. Raftery

The author is the Editor of the Irish Socialist, *organ of the Irish Workers' Party.*

LABOUR IN IRISH HISTORY[1] contains all the main threads of James Connolly's political philosophy. It is written, he says, on the basis of:

> "This proposition or key to history, as set forth by Karl Marx, the greatest of modern thinkers and first of scientific socialists. 'That in every historical epoch the prevailing method of economic production and exchange and the social organisation necessarily following from it, form the basis upon which can be explained the political and intellectual history of that epoch'."

Analysing what had happened in Irish history, James Connolly draws some main conclusions. The first is that the oppression of Ireland is not only political but economic as well. The second is that only the "men of no property" as another great revolutionary, Wolfe Tone, called them, can be relied on to carry the fight for the independence of Ireland through to a finish.

Two Conceptions of Irish History

It is useful to have some idea of the background against which the book was written. In the struggle against English rule in Ireland there have always been two tendencies. One, the revolutionary, had expressed itself in the revolts of 1798, in sections of the Young Ireland movement and through the Fenians. At the time that *Labour in Irish History* was written the second tendency, the Constitutional or Parliamentary, was dominant. These two tendencies broadly represented different class interests. The Constitutional movement represented the interests of those sections of the upper class who

[1] James Connolly, *Labour in Irish History*, New Books, Dublin, 2s. 6d., available from Central Books.

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had, wrote Connolly, "a thousand economic strings in the shape of investments binding them to English capitalism as against every sentimental or historic attachment drawing them towards Irish patriotism".

The Constitutionalists presented a version of history which reduced such really revolutionary figures as Wolfe Tone and the Fenians to the level of harmless romantic figures and elevated those like Daniel O'Connell, who were in the Constitutional tradition, to the dimensions of colossi. The people were left out. In the armoury of the Parliamentarians of Connolly's time, history was used not as a means of rallying people to the fight for independence but as a soporific.

It is the determination to expose this version of history, which he rightly saw as a stumbling block to the development of a genuine movement for independence, which gives *Labour in Irish History* the element of passion in the way in which it is written. It is because Connolly was himself so excited by many of the discoveries which he had made that the book breathes a life and a personality.

While Connolly may incorrectly describe Marxism as "economic determinism" this book, in particular, shows the way in which he had grasped the essence of Marxism. As a thinker he had an instinctive grasp of the central features of a philosophy or a situation. This more than made up for any purely academic deficiencies.

One of the most important elements in the development of the movement for independence, was the Gaelic revival movement. It is astonishing how even such an authority as Professor Myles Dillon can today state that Connolly cared nothing for the revival of the Irish language.

The Irish Language

To the "practical" Labour leaders of Connolly's day such things as the Irish language were looked on as simply diversions. Connolly, however, showed the depth of his Marxist understanding by recognising that all aspects of society were the concern of the Socialist. He therefore tackled the question of the Gaelic revival but not on a sentimental basis. Basing himself on the discoveries of Lewis Morgan, whose *Ancient Society* also supplied the facts for Engels's *Origin of the Family*, and upon the facts about ancient Irish society which were available to him, Connolly showed how class society had been imposed on Ireland instead of developing naturally. The invasions broke up a society which still retained many features of a primitive communist character. He wrote: "Ireland, at the same time as she lost her ancient social system, also lost her language as the vehicle of thought of those who acted as her leaders. As a result of this two-fold loss the nation suffered socially, nationally and intellectually from a prolonged arrested development."

He therefore showed that the oppression of Ireland was also cultural. He presented *Labour in Irish History* as a book which:

> "may justly be looked upon as part of the literature of the Gaelic revival. As the Gaelic language, scorned by the possessing classes, sought and found its last fortress in the hearts and houses of the 'lower orders' to re-issue from thence in our own time to what the writer believes to be a greater and more enduring place in civilisation than of old, so in the minds of Thomas Francis Meaghan, the same 'wretched cabins' have been the holy shrines in which the traditions and the hopes of Ireland have been treasured and transmitted."

Socialism and the National Struggle

That quotation, in a way, sums up much of James Connolly. All his life he called on the working-class movement to realise that it was the inheritor not only of what was specifically working-class but of all that was best in the entire Irish tradition of struggle, whether on the political, economic, cultural, or social levels. He presented the struggle for Socialism, not as something separate from all these struggles but as their natural culmination. At a time when even outstanding Socialist leaders like Rosa Luxembourg thought that the national struggles of peoples were a diversion from Socialism, Connolly had grasped the truth that they were an integral part of a forward movement and that Socialism was impossible until national freedom had been achieved.

But Connolly insisted on seeing this struggle in class terms. *Labour in Irish History* is designed to expose those sections of the capitalist class who demagogically used attacks on "the real enemy—England" in order to deny the "relation between the social rights of the Irish toilers and the political rights of the Irish nation."

Against Religious Division

One of the main weapons used by imperialism to divide the Irish people was the question of religion. Protestant was set against Catholic with the disastrous results which culminated in the division of the country. For their own reasons many of the Constitutionalists accepted this division. Catholicism was made synonomous with patriotism and Protestantism with the oppressor. In the North the Protestants were inflamed against the Catholics in the opposite way, summed up in the slogan: "Home Rule is Rome Rule."

The revolutionary movement in Ireland was always against any division on religious grounds. The man known as the Father of Irish Republi-

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canism, Wolfe Tone, had summed up his policy when he declared that his tactics for "breaking the connection with England" were "to substitute the common name of Irishmen in place of the denominations of Protestant, Catholic and Dissenter". Connolly probably felt closer to Tone than any other figure in Irish history. Tone, too, had proposed to fight for the independence of Ireland on the basis of a "class war" against those upper-class sections whom so many Irish national movements tried to woo to their side, without success. To Connolly imperialism was never just the physical occupation of Ireland by British troops. He saw, as did Tone, that unless the power of those Irish classes who co-operated with the oppressors for their own profit (the gentry in Tone's day, the big capitalists in his) was broken, Ireland could not be free.

In his researches he discovered that King William, the hero of Orange bigotry, who is always represented as having saved the North from Popery, was in fact in league with the Pope, and that *Te Deums* were sung in the Vatican when his forces beat those of King James at the Battle of the Boyne.

The People Make History

Such facts, which even now would cause amazement among most Irish people, were but another aspect of Connolly as a historian. Limited his resources may have been, but *Labour in Irish History* is the product of genuine research. Just as earlier he had published the *98 Readings*, selections from the writings of the United Irishmen, so here he was concerned to bring out the true revolutionary and democratic character of the Irish struggle. While he paid tribute to the great figures his real aim was to bring back the ordinary people into history, to show them as the decisive force. A small peasant outbreak, involving a handful of people, meant more to Connolly than all the rivers of oratory by such Parliamentary figures as Grattan and Flood.

He wanted to bring it home to the workers and the small farmers that it was they who were the makers of history. He wanted to break down the myth, so well cultivated by the conservative forces, that all the people had to do was give unquestioning support to some "great" figure. He wanted the people to think.

The fact that he wrote this book at a time when the labour movement was starting to undergo one of its greatest developments, and while he was heavily engaged in practical work, shows that Connolly fully understood the importance of a theoretical analysis as the basis for political action. *Labour in Irish History* is a handbook for revolution. Take, for instance, Connolly's analysis of Tone's tactics in first of all proposing a non-revolutionary measure, the reform of Parliament. He praises this and speaks of "a revolutionary party openly declaring their revolutionary sympathies but limiting their first demand to a popular measure such as would enfranchise the masses upon whose support their ultimate success must rest".

While England was at peace and constitutional action was possible Tone suited his tactics to this peaceful period. When England went to war and oppression of all opposition began Tone turned to military methods. Similarly, both Connolly and Padraig Pearse, another great leader of the 1916 revolt, supported Home Rule before the World War broke out but changed their tactics in the changed situation. Ironically, the "ultra-militants" like Arthur Griffith, who opposed Home Rule before the War refused to take part in 1916, and Griffith later was the one who pushed through the compromise treaty of 1921 with Britain. Connolly and Pearse saw Home Rule as merely a step on the road. After Home Rule was established the fight could begin for the next stage of the struggle. Connolly pictured the next stage as being a struggle against the native capitalist class. Griffith had no such perspective. The classes which he, unconsciously perhaps, represented did not see themselves in opposition but in power. Those who had supported the Irish Parliamentary Party transferred their support to Griffith.

This would not have surprised Connolly who had summed up the role of the different classes in Irish society when he wrote of the collapse of the volunteer movement at the end of the 18th century. "The working men fought, the capitalists sold out and the lawyers bluffed."

Irish Roots of Socialism

The allegation that Socialism was foreign to Ireland was one which was used very effectively by the Conservative forces of Connolly's day. The potency of this distortion, in a country with a strong national feeling, did not diminish in the years after Connolly's death. Connolly set out to prove that Socialism, far from being a foreign importation, had firm roots in Ireland. One of the main chapters in his book is devoted to William Thompson of Co. Cork who, in such works as *An Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth most conducive to Human Happiness* had, wrote Connolly, "long ante-dated Karl Marx in his insistance upon the subjection of labour as the cause of all social misery". He quotes at length from the works of Thompson published in 1824, 1827 and 1830 and writes that "his position in the development of Socialism as a science lies, in our opinion, midway between the utopianism of the

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early idealists and the historical materialism of Marx." He then makes the following observation on Marx:

> "Although Thompson recognised this class war as a fact, he did not recognise it as a factor, as *the* factor in the evolution of society towards freedom. This was reserved for Marx and in our opinion is his chief and crowning glory."

James Connolly, while pointing out the native roots of the ideas which he was presenting was not doing this in order to make something exclusively Irish out of them. He wrote about the great revolutionary James Fintan Lalor:

> "like all the really dangerous revolutionists of Ireland (he) advocated his principles as part of the creed of the democracy of the world and not merely as applicable only to the incidents of the struggle of Ireland against England."

To love the tradition of your country does not mean to despise the traditions of other countries but to understand them better. To fight for the freedom of your own country is to contribute to the freeing of other countries not to ignore their struggles. To fight for Socialism in your own country, on the basis of its traditions, is the best way to contribute to the world-wide victory of Socialism. This is Connolly's internationalism.

The ideas of *Labour in Irish History* are supplemented by his analysis of contemporary conditions in *The Re-conquest of Ireland*.[2] The style of *Labour in Irish History* is swift and pungent. The style of the *Re-conquest* is, in places, rather turgid and does not make easy reading. This is due mainly to a lapse by Connolly into attempts at philosophising, a weak point of his and in part to the fact that he was grappling with the unknown, attempting to project policies for the period when Home Rule would be a fact. Nevertheless, this book is invaluable, not only in its picture of social conditions, but also for its political projections and its demonstration that the oppression of Ireland was *social* as well as political, economic and cultural.

Then and Now

The social conditions of Dublin, far worse than those of Belfast, were due not to capitalism but to imperialism. Belfast, in order to keep the majority of its population loyal, was given certain concessions. Dublin, on the other hand, had a death rate higher than Calcutta at a time when plague was raging there.

The political freedom won for 26 counties of Ireland has shown that, first of all, given freedom, a secure economic basis can be built and secondly, has demonstrated that Connolly was correct when he saw that the capitalist class would be unable to achieve real freedom even after the troops left. After a short period of development under the first Fianna Fail Governments the capitalists class is now reducing the 26 counties once again to a subservient part of Britain.

It's true that the worst aspects of poverty are not today as bad as they were in Connolly's day and the contrast in these fields between Dublin and Belfast have gone. Connolly gives a death rate of 27.6 per 1,000 in Dublin. In 1965 it was down to 10.03. In 1915 in Belfast the death rate was only 17.9. In 1964 it was 11.5, slightly higher than Dublin. In 1915 the infant mortality rate in Dublin was 168 per thousand live births. Today it is around 28. Many of the Dublin slums of Connolly's day have disappeared, and Dublin Corporation building programmes have contracted schemes of houses and flats which now accommodate up to 40 per cent of the population of Dublin.

These figures certainly show progress but the fact is that the basic situation exposed by Connolly still exists. Economically our industries and financial system are becoming more and more dominated by foreign monopolies. The pattern of our agriculture, set at the time of the Famine, to produce cheap beef mainly for Britain, far from being changed is being intensified. The depopulation of the countryside of which Connolly writes, is proceeding rapidly with the gobbling up of small farms by bigger ones.

The fact is that in Connolly's day it suited the interests of the big capitalists and the imperialists to have a half-starved labour force crowded into stinking tenements. The more overcrowded the tenements the more rent could be squeezed out of them. They wanted a cheap labour force and its conditions were no concern of theirs.

The struggle of the trade union and labour movements which made their great breakthrough in 1913 under the leadership of James Larkin and James Connolly, ended this situation. The working class could no longer be treated as animals. The fact is, however, that many of the Dublin slums of which Connolly wrote still existed up to little more than a decade ago. The big housing programme had, in the main, merely succeeded in housing the tremendous number of extra people who came into Dublin because of the exodus from the countryside. In 1904 the population of Dublin was 293,000. In 1965 it had grown to 563,000. When families were housed from tenements the tenements were not knocked down but re-let.

Then, over ten years ago, English property developers, looking for places to invest money,

[2] James Connolly—*The Re-conquest of Ireland*, New Books, Dublin, 2s. 6d.

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began to take an interest in the centre of Dublin. Many of the slums had reached the stage where they could no longer stand up and had to be taken down. It was the drive for profit by the foreign developers, however, which forced the wholesale devastation of the centre of Dublin in which both rotten and fit buildings have been tumbled indiscriminately.

The workers are being rehoused miles out in the countryside where there are no facilities while the city centre, the ideal place to construct living accommodation, is being used for office blocks.

The same forces, who sucked the life's blood from the people in 1915 today find it more profitable to do it in other ways.

New slums are arising in the areas which, in Connolly's day, were looked on as the preserve of the upper classes. The houses of such areas as Rathmines and Rathgan are being turned into up to 10 dwellings per house. The difference between Connolly's day and now are the rents being charged. These can take over half the wages of a working-class newly-married couple.

The situation has become so serious that the Dublin City Medical Officer took the unprecedented step in his Report for 1965 of calling for some form of rent control over such lettings. The answer of the Government was to bring in an Act decontrolling already controlled rents.

English property firms are buying up much of this property through agents in Ireland. The social exploitation of which Connolly wrote goes on.

Not Yet Reconquered

The Re-conquest of Ireland aims to put forward policies to wrest the control of Irish affairs in all fields away from imperialism. Connolly presents a united militant working class as the only force capable of leading the movement which can do this. He lays great emphasis on the necessity for unity between the working class North and South. It is sometimes said that the workers in that Northern part of Ireland are much better off than those in the South because they have parity with British workers. The truth is that in 1961, for instance, the average weekly earnings of adult male workers in manufacturing industry in the North of Ireland was only 78 per cent of that of their British counterparts. The Northern workers have as much to gain from the defeat of imperialism as the Southern.

While seeing the working class as the main force Connolly, however, saw how important all the other forces who suffered from imperialism were. In particular he saw the importance of the small farmers and the absolute necessity for an alliance between them and the working class. He went much further than that, however, to include in the movement for progress "the Gaelic Leaguer", "the apostle of self-reliance amongst Irishmen and women", "the earnest advocate of co-operation" and "the earnest teacher of Christian morality".

This last point brings us to one of the main themes of Connolly's writings, one which he developed in his *Labour, Nationality and Religion* where he replied to the attacks on Socialism contained in a series of lectures by a Fr. Kane. Connolly revolted against the idea, prevalent in some of the more sectarian sections of the labour movement, that only an atheist could be a Socialist or a follower of Marx. He saw such an attitude as a self-limiting barrier. Socialism and Marxism are the heritage of all peoples, no matter what their religion or lack of it.

In this recognition of the necessity to find allies lay one of Connolly greatest strengths. It is a lesson which the labour movement has not yet learned in Ireland or in many places outside it.

The ideas expressed in these books are based on Irish experiences and have particular relevance to the attempt to build a progressive movement in Ireland but their significance goes far beyond that.

In his analysis of Irish history, Connolly has shown the role which different classes play not only in Ireland but in all oppressed countries. He has pointed out the vacillations of some classes, the treacheries of others and the steadfastness of yet others and has explained them scientifically, on the basis of the real interests involved. In all his writings there is the emphasis on the necessity for the working class not only to fight but also to learn. There is the lesson to the Socialist movement to get rid of sectarian barriers between itself and the people.

Socialism means not only a better material life for people. It has a moral content; it aims to do away with exploitation and to create conditions where on all levels, culturally, politically and economically, the people will be drawn into participation and understanding. It may be that towards the end of *The Re-conquest of Ireland* there are echoes of the Syndicalism which Connolly accepted for a while, but here the emphasis is on the necessity of the people being in control of their destinies.

The Marxism of Connolly's works is a living Marxism, infused with the sense of struggle, discovery and vision.

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Discussion Contribution on:

The National Problem in Britain

Idris Cox

WHEN Bert Pearce wrote his article on *The National Future of Scotland and Wales* for *Marxism Today* in November 1967, it was an indication that the Communist Party recognised the growth of national consciousness in Scotland and Wales. The electoral advances made by the Scottish Nationalists and Plaid Cymru, together with a rapid growth in their membership, is a new and important political factor demanding the serious attention of all political parties in Britain.

The return of a nationalist MP in both Wales and Scotland, and the big advance in their vote at municipal elections, cannot be isolated from the political situation in both these countries. These electoral victories are not the end of the road, but the beginning of a new stage. It is now recognised that the nationalist movement in Scotland and Wales is an important and growing force to be reckoned with. This is not confined to elections, but also to the fact that the membership of the Scottish Nationalist Party is now more than 60,000, and the membership of Plaid Cymru is more than 30,000.

This is more than the individual membership of the Labour Party (as distinct from the affiliated membership) in both Scotland and Wales, and is certainly far more than the membership of the Communist Party. Moreover, in both countries the nationalist parties are politically active in many fields, including the economic and cultural life of the people no less than in the electoral field. For all these reasons the national problem in Scotland and Wales deserves the most serious political analysis, and far more attention and discussion within the Labour and progressive movement in Britain, and especially within the Communist Party.

It would be invidious on my part to try and grapple with all the aspects of this complicated problem in one article, for it involves not only matters of Welsh and Scottish history and the national feelings of their peoples, but also basic theoretical and practical issues. My remarks are therefore more in the nature of carrying the discussion a stage further in the hope of clearing up some aspects which still seem to me to be quite unclear.

What is a Nation?

In his article in the *Morning Star* James Reid starts off with the statement that: "By whatever definition one cares to use, Scotland is a nation." This assertion is made without any attempt at a political analysis, nor does it seem to draw any conclusion, except that "The Scottish people have a right to demand and receive self-government, and realise their national aspirations."

If it is correct that Scotland is a nation, then James Reid accepts fully the claim made by the Scottish Nationalists. This being the case it follows that the Communist demand for Scotland is not merely for "self-government" but for complete independence, with its own independent state, army, civil service, and the right of separate representation in the United Nations, not to mention a separate Labour Party and a separate Communist Party of Scotland.

While in full agreement with the need for separate Parliaments in Scotland and Wales, I must disagree with an independent Scotland and Wales. The historical background of developments in both countries during recent centuries is such that they have become part of a British imperialist system and not separate nations.

In my view both Scotland and Wales were on the way to *becoming* nations before England's Act of Union with Wales in 1536 and with Scotland in 1707. Lenin often emphasised that the birth of nations takes place with developments towards a capitalist society. Before 1707 there were signs of this in Scotland, but far less in Wales. They *could* have become nations, but their rising bourgeoisie joined hands instead with the English bourgeoisie and played an important part in building a *British* capitalist system, rather than a Scottish or Welsh system.

The economic system in Wales has for over four centuries, and in Scotland for over two centuries, become integrated with the British economy. The rising capitalist elements in both countries did not have a separate existence, but became integrated with the English capitalists into a British capitalist class.

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This also became the character of the working-class movement in both countries, which integrated with the English into a British working-class movement, culminating with the formation of the British TUC in 1868 and the British Labour Party in 1906. True, for historical reasons there were also a Scottish TUC and a Scottish Council of the Labour Party, but these are more in the nature of devolutionary instruments rather than completely independent organisations for Scotland.

With the resurgence of national feeling in Scotland and Wales and the growing support for separate Parliaments, it may well be that the existing nationalities in both countries will advance more rapidly towards becoming nations. Whether this is achieved within the capitalist system, or through the achievement of socialism in Britain will depend entirely on the scope and intensity of the united fight for socialism in Britain as a whole, coupled with the advance towards achieving the national demands of the peoples of Scotland and Wales.

Since his death in 1953 it has not been fashionable to quote from Stalin's writings. There is a trend in some Communist circles to condemn him for everything which went wrong in the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement, but it is useful to make the distinction between what Stalin *wrote* and his actions. When he wrote "Marxism and the National Question" in 1913 his attitude on the national problem had full support from Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and it contains much that is extremely valuable for a basic analysis of the national problem in Britain today.

When Stalin wrote on this subject he was concerned particularly with its application to the situation in European countries, though not specifically with Britain. In answer to "What is a Nation?", he gives a number of distinctive features, summed up in these words:

> "A nation is a historically evolved, stable community of language, territory, economic life and psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture."

These terms are admittedly general, but Stalin's explanatory remarks are by no means dogmatic, for he went on to explain that "It goes without saying that a nation, like every other historical phenomenon, is subject to the law of change, has its history, its beginning and end."

How do Wales and Scotland fit in to Stalin's definition. However stormy their past history, they are certainly "historically evolved", and have a community of territory, and a "psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture." But it does not seem they have a community of economic life, for this has been weakened and disrupted from a Welsh and Scottish standpoint by the integration into the economic life of Britain as a whole.

As for community of language, this exists only in so far as English has replaced Gaelic in Scotland and Welsh in Wales. A century ago the majority of Welsh inhabitants spoke Welsh. But it has gradually declined until today just over one in four speak the language.

Stalin was extremely careful to emphasise that the character of the national struggle would vary in different conditions, and that the specific nature of every national problem must be taken into account:

> "It follows from this that the solution of the national problem can be arrived at only if due consideration is paid to historical conditions in their development. The economic, political and cultural conditions of a given nation constitute the only key to the question of *how* a particular nation ought to arrange its life and *what forms* its future constitution ought to take. It is possible that a specific solution of the problem will be required for each nation. If, indeed, a dialectical approach to a question is required anywhere it is required here, in the national question."

Character of the Struggle

Because Scotland and Wales are an integral part of the British imperialist system, which exploits both the newly-independent states and the remaining colonies, the character of their struggle differs from the liberation movements, which have long fought against British imperialism. They are part and parcel of the exploiting and oppressive machinery of imperialism, though at the same time being exploited and oppressed from the standpoint of their national rights. This is not only a matter of their inferior position within the British economic system, but is also a refusal of the democratic right of self-government, and raises barriers which prevent the growth of their culture and the enrichment of their language.

Gaelic is not so important a factor for Scotland, because of the small number of people reading and speaking the language. However, this is not a matter of arithmetical proportion, but one of principle. For example, in Wales, where 25 per cent of the people speak Welsh, all kinds of barriers have existed against the growth of the Welsh language ever since it was forbidden under the Act of Union with England in 1536.

Moreover, when it is argued that the majority of people in Wales are English-speaking, what is left out of account is that in five of the 13 Welsh counties the vast majority of people speak Welsh (ranging from 67 to 72 per cent) and in three other

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counties the proportion is well above the national average. From a geographical standpoint, most of Wales is still Welsh-speaking. Even in the mainly non-Welsh-speaking counties of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire there are about 220,000 Welsh-speaking people.

In recent years there has been an awakening of Scottish interest in the Gaelic language and in many aspects of Scottish culture. In Wales the younger generation have far greater opportunities for learning Welsh, with special schools where Welsh is the first language. In both Wales and Scotland there has been a considerable revival on radio and television of their specific cultures.

In October 1965 the Royal Commission on the Welsh language presented its report, going a long way to offset the anti-Welsh provisions of the 1536 Act of Union, and towards providing an equal status for both English and Welsh. In this respect the report still had many serious defects, but at least it represented a big step forward for the survival of the Welsh language.

Scottish and Welsh Nationalists

In face of this situation there has arisen in Wales since 1925, and in Scotland since 1928, national movements which set the aim of winning independence. They present the enemy as "English domination", being seemingly oblivious to the fact that the capitalists and landlords of both countries have become integrated into a *British* imperialist system, which includes both Welsh and Scottish exploiters.

Presented in this way there is no conception of the *class* nature of the struggle for Welsh and Scottish national rights, for England and the English are the enemy, and the English working class is not seen as an ally in the common struggle against the common enemy. Also, this concept diverts attention from capitalist and big business elements which still exist in a large measure in Scotland and Wales.

In neither of the two countries do the nationalists envisage taking part in a British Parliament if they succeed in getting their own Parliaments. In an interview in *The Guardian* on November 16th, 1967, Mrs. Winifred Ewing, MP, answering a question on this matter, made clear she was dead against it. Mr. Gwynfor Evans, MP, in the *Morning Star* on February 6th, 1968, was rather more nebulous on the attitude of Plaid Cymru:

> "We aim for complete control of our economy, social life, defence, relations with other peoples, but it is nonsense to talk of us as separatist. Economic separation from England is impossible. A common market, a customs union with no tariffs, no passports, no frontier, freedom of movement as today, is what we envisage."

Position of England

So far, I have dealt with the position of Scotland and Wales, and their existing relations with the system of British imperialism. In my view this is quite inadequate, for I regard the national question in Britain as a *British* problem. It cannot simply be farmed out to Scotland and Wales. In a different sense England is inseparably involved in this problem.

If and when separate Parliaments are won for Scotland and Wales, is not England to have its separate Parliament? From the standpoint of the nationalists it appears the British Parliament would become an *English* Parliament, for they would withdraw from the existing British Parliament.

Should this be the Marxist viewpoint? The implication in the amended version of *The British Road to Socialism* is that the British Parliament would remain substantially in its present form, except that it would deal with all-British problems and foreign relations, but *not* with the internal problems of Scotland and Wales.

As distinct from the nationalist viewpoint, I assume our programme would still provide for Welsh and Scottish MPs being elected to the British Parliament. If this is the case they would be able to intervene in the British Parliament on the problems of England, but the English MPs would have no right to intervene in the internal problems of Wales and Scotland.

To me, this is rather a ludicrous situation. It would provide fruitful ground for sharp divisions between the people of Wales and Scotland on the one hand, and the people of England on the other. Far from cementing unity on a British level it would lead to greater disunity.

To win the demand for separate Parliaments for Wales and Scotland presupposes overwhelming support in England. It is most unlikely this demand can ever be achieved unless it becomes an *all-British* issue. At the moment England has no stake in the fight for separate Parliaments in Wales and Scotland, unless the aim is also set for a separate English Parliament, and a *federal system* of government for the whole of Britain.

Far be it for me to claim that the federal system is an ideal one. But there are also other European countries with problems of national minorities—Belgium with the Flemings and Walloons, France with the Bretons, and Canada with the French in Quebec. Even in Czechoslovakia there are the Slovaks, Bohemians and Moravians. Yugoslavia's solution to their problem was a federal system.

Whatever the fate of "federations" set up by British imperialism (i.e. Central Africa, Malaysia, Aden and Nigeria), this is not to question the *principle* of federation, but only its *unequal* character in particular circumstances. Given satisfactory

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conditions a federal system *could* be a suitable form for Britain in the present situation and could provide a satisfactory means for advancing the national aspirations of Wales, Scotland and England, while in practice strengthening the unity of Britain as a whole.

Federal System

Lenin had occasion to make some remarks on the national problem in Britain over half a century ago. Arising from comments made by Engels in 1875 on the Gotha Programme of the German Social Democrats, he dealt with the question of democracy and a federal republic in Britain in his *State and Revolution* (August 1917), in the following words:

> "Even in England, where geographical conditions, common language, and the history of many centuries would seem to have put 'an end' to the national question in the separate small divisions of England —even here Engels is cognisant of the patent fact that the national question has not yet been overcome, and recognises, in consequence, that the establishment of a federal republic would be a 'step forward'. Of course, there is no trace here of refusing to criticise the defects of the federal republic or to conduct the most determined propaganda and fight for a united and centralised democratic republic."

It will be noticed that Lenin at that time still wrote of "England" instead of Britain—a fault which is still common in many socialist countries because the size and population of England is predominant over Wales and Scotland together, with English as the common language in all three countries.

In the earlier days of the labour movement there was little or no hesitation in supporting the demand for "Home Rule" for Ireland, and also for Wales, Scotland and England, and for a British federal government. At the Labour Party Conference in June 1918 this is how the demand was presented:

> ". . . it considers that some early devolution from Westminster of both legislation and administration is imperatively called for; it suggests that, along with the grant of Home Rule to Ireland, there should be constituted separate statutory legislative assemblies for Scotland, Wales, and even England, with autonomous administration in matters of local concern, and that the Parliament in Westminster should be retained in the form of a Federal Assembly for the United Kingdom . . ."

In presenting this resolution, with no opposition, Mr. Arthur Henderson, then General Secretary of the Labour Party, made it clear that:

> "Personally, he saw no reason why, if they were going to give a separate Parliament to Wales and to Scotland, they should not have a similar Parliament for England."

Of course, a great deal has happened in this past fifty years. There was the division of Ireland, and the setting up of a separate Northern Ireland Parliament under British control. Now it is not simply a matter of "Home Rule", but a united and independent democratic Ireland, and Northern Ireland would have no part as such in a British federal system.

The principle of federalism was also embodied in the Bill which Mr. Jeremy Thorpe, MP, presented on behalf of the Liberal Party to Parliament in February this year, but still aiming to retain the Northern Ireland Parliament under British control. Despite her misgivings on federalism, Mrs. Winifred Ewing, MP, voted for it.

On the other hand, Gwynfor Evans (in a letter to *The Times* on February 12th, 1968) expressed his opposition to a federal system for Britain. His claim was that federalism is suitable for "provinces, regions, or national minorities", but not for "autonomous nations". He went on to argue that "Federalism would require a constitutional upheaval", but that "The Commonwealth status demanded by the national parties of Scotland and Wales has the immeasurable advantage of leaving the English constitution untouched".

In a sense, Bert Pearce, in his reply to Gwynfor Evans's article in the *Morning Star*, gives a similar impression of the "complexities of a federal system and a separate English Parliament".

Naturally, big changes of this character have their "complexities", but to believe that a Welsh Parliament can be achieved without constitutional changes is to bury one's head in the sand. While Scotland has already many separate rights, Wales is closely bound with England in the whole character of the legislative and administrative system of the United Kingdom.

My own view is that the struggle to fulfil the national aspirations of the people of Scotland and Wales is inseparable from the need to resist the over-centralised and bureaucratic administration in Britain. The amended programme *The British Road to Socialism* devotes only one paragraph (in the section *The Maintenance and Extension of Democratic Rights*) to the demand for separate Parliaments for Scotland and Wales. But in the next section, *Social Rights*, there is not a single word about the relation of this demand to "democratically elected regional councils" as part of the process of decentralising the top-heavy and centralised administration in Britain.

Already there are official Government proposals to transform the 13 Welsh counties into five regional councils. There would be possibly more in Scotland and even more in England. Whatever the weaknesses of the present proposals, it is evident that no real

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democratic advance is possible in Britain unless the system of local government throughout Britain is transformed, and the people given greater opportunities to be more closely involved in the machinery of government from the bottom to the top. Separate Parliaments for Scotland, Wales *and* England, are an essential aspect of this process.

It seems to me there is no solution to the problem except by means of a federal system for Britain in which there is a separate Parliament for England, as well as for Scotland and Wales. In my view this is extremely important, for it is my belief there will never be separate Parliaments for Scotland and Wales unless England gives its backing. Otherwise, the national problem in Britain is contracted out to Wales and Scotland, doomed to linger on as a special minority issue in relation to Britain as a whole, without any hope of a solution.

It's not only in England that the Labour movement still has to be won over to support separate Parliaments, but even in Scotland and Wales. Public opinion polls are not always reliable, but the most recent in Scotland (February 1968) indicated nearly 53 per cent in favour of "Home Rule". But soon after (March 24th), at the annual conference of the Scottish Labour Party, a resolution in favour of a Scottish Parliament was overwhelmingly defeated, with only a tiny handful of votes in favour. This is also likely to be the case at the June annual conference of the Welsh region of the Labour Party. In this matter the official Labour movement is lagging far behind the growing support for separate Parliaments. So there's great need for more intensive campaigning in Scotland and Wales, as well as in England.

With a federal Parliament for Britain as a whole, and separate Parliaments for internal affairs in England, Scotland and Wales, it will be possible to combine the national rights of the three countries with the common interests of the British people as a whole.

The respective functions of the federal Parliament and the three separate Parliaments does not present a difficult constitutional problem. In general, the federal Parliament would have overall control of the economy, finance, armed forces and police, and foreign policy, and would represent Britain in the United Nations.

The separate Parliaments would plan their own economy (in mutual agreement with the federal Parliament and the general aims of the British economy as a whole), and this would also apply to the civil service, the armed forces, and policy, all the social services, and the promotion of cultural activities.

United Labour and Progressive Movement

Of course, constitutional changes in themselves do not provide an automatic solution. The most decisive factor is the growth of a united labour and progressive movement, in which the Communist Party is the driving force. This will involve a far greater concentration of the Communist Party in Scotland and Wales on the problems in their respective countries, not only in relation to economic development, but to all aspects of the struggle in their countries, including language and culture, and the fulfilment of the national aspirations of their peoples. This would dovetail into the united struggle of the British people as a whole and serve to give a new impetus to the common aim of advancing on the road to socialism.

It seems to me that in regard to both Scotland and Wales we need to attune ourselves more closely to the national aspirations of the people, not only in relation to the economic and political future, but also to the advancement of their language and national culture. While taking into account the political weakness and wrong attitude of the nationalist movement in both countries, Communists should explore every avenue for common action with them on issues of common agreement.

In this respect, instead of treating Scotland and Wales simply as districts, similar to the 17 districts in England, it would improve the political image of the Communist Party in Wales to present the district leadership as the "Welsh National Council of the Communist Party" and in Scotland as the "Scottish National Council of the Communist Party".

No one should be under the illusion that these changes in themselves will provide a solution for all our problems in Scotland and Wales. Unity of the labour and progressive movement for Britain as a whole is still the main factor which can bring about decisive changes, but this unity can be reinforced by winning over these progressive elements in Scotland and Wales who are deeply concerned with achieving their national rights.

Instead of allowing them to be isolated from association with the labour and progressive movement in Britain, we need to break new ground with a more comprehensive presentation of the relation between their demand for national rights with the struggle of the English people and throughout Britain as a whole.

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